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Secretary

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DOH UPDATES FLU VACCINE RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, Florida Secretary of Health, M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D., announced recommendations for all Floridians concerning flu vaccine and distribution. "I understand the frustrations some Floridians have experienced when trying to locate flu vaccine in the last two weeks. A recent announcement by Florida's distributor of Chiron manufactured flu vaccine indicating they will only fill a portion of their orders will make locating flu vaccine even more difficult for the next few weeks," said François. "Even though Florida is anticipating a significant shipment of vaccine from the CDC in early December, we need to make the best use of the vaccine that is currently available and offer alternatives as appropriate. In light of the supply challenges we are experiencing, I am making the following recommendations:"

- All health care providers should review their patient population carefully and if necessary limit the available vaccine to those patients in the high-risk category until supplies stabilize.
- Floridians who are healthy, and between the ages of 5 and 49, should discuss the value and availability of Flumist with their health care provider.
- Parents should discuss pediatric flu vaccine with their primary health care provider. Immunizing your children will not only offer them protection from flu but indirectly will also help protect your family.
- The peak of flu season in Florida is in mid February. A vaccination in November or December will still provide you with protection from influenza.
- Seniors should remember that pneumonia is a serious complication of flu. Talk to your health care provider about receiving a pneumococcal inoculation.

Floridians are encouraged to take other steps to prevent getting and spreading the flu this season including:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and warm water. (Anti-bacterial liquid hand gels are useful if soap and water are unavailable.)
- Cover your mouth when you cough.
- Stay home when you are sick, and keep children home from school and daycare when they are sick.
- Stay healthy: get plenty of rest, healthy foods, fluids and exercise.

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