

Mission:  
To protect, promote & improve the health  
of all people in Florida through integrated  
state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott  
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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## **FLORIDIANS ENCOURAGED TO GET FLU SHOTS**

*~ Flu remains a concern across the state and it's not too late to protect yourself ~*

**TALLAHASSEE** — Although influenza activity has declined in recent weeks, it remains widespread throughout the state. The Florida Department of Health continues to urge residents to get the flu vaccine to reduce their risk of complications from flu. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates this season's vaccine is offering reduced protection, the flu vaccine is safe and remains the best protection against the flu and especially severe outcomes that require hospitalization. Individuals who have chronic health conditions are also less likely to get severe flu if they seek care early and are treated with antiviral medications.

"This year's flu season is active and intense," said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health, Dr. John Armstrong. "Flu vaccination remains helpful to protect Florida's families from severe flu outcomes, so it is not too late to get your flu shot. If you develop flu symptoms, be sure to contact your health care professional to determine the need for anti-flu medications, which may shorten symptoms by 24 hours."

Most people don't know there are prescription drugs available through health care providers that treat the flu, called influenza antivirals. Antivirals work, they can keep people out of the intensive care unit and save lives, but they aren't used nearly enough. One study shows only one in five high-risk outpatients are receiving anti-viral treatment. Doctors are urged to administer antiviral medications early, ideally within two days of the start of illness, even before laboratory confirmation of the disease. Antivirals may lessen the severity and duration of illness and are most effective when taken right away. Two FDA-approved influenza antiviral medications are recommended for use in the United States: oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®).

Individuals who will be helped the most from antiviral drugs include the following:

- People 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women
- Children under the age of five
- Immunocompromised individuals (e.g., people with HIV or those receiving immunosuppressive medications like chemotherapy)
- People with chronic medical conditions (e.g., heart or lung disease, diabetes)
- Prevention for people who have been vaccinated for less than two weeks

- Prevention for unvaccinated people caring for those at high risk (e.g., employees of hospitals, clinics, nursing homes)

The flu vaccine is offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, retail stores, pharmacies, health centers and by many employers and schools. Visit <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/flu-prevention/locate-a-flu-shot.html> to search for a flu vaccine location near you.

For further information regarding flu activity, messaging and guidance, visit the influenza homepage at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/floridaflu> . There, Floridians can review the most recent data and access guidance materials tailored for schools, healthcare providers and long-term care facilities.

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts. Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#) and on [Facebook](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.floridahealth.gov](http://www.floridahealth.gov).

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