

Mission:

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



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Governor

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Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

2014-2015 Influenza Season Recommendations for Health Care Providers:

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Vaccination:**Please identify and vaccinate your patients that still need to be vaccinated this flu season.**

- **Vaccine uptake is highest among patients when recommended and offered in doctor's offices.** For example, pregnant women receiving a recommendation and offer of vaccination by their healthcare provider were over six times more likely to get vaccinated (65%) than women who did not receive a recommendation or offer (10%).
- **The flu vaccine is safe and continues to be the best protection to avoid getting the flu and severe outcomes if infected.**
- This week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that, nationally, this year's flu vaccine is not as effective against the most common flu strain identified this year because the virus has changed. Despite the change or "drift" in this strain, vaccination can still decrease severity of illness. It can also protect against other circulating strains of the virus, which is why vaccination is still recommended.
- **The national Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that all individuals six months of age and older receive the flu vaccine each year.**

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/index.htm>

- Vaccination to prevent influenza is particularly important for people who are at high risk for serious complications from influenza such as children, pregnant and postpartum patients, adults aged ≥ 65 years, individuals with certain underlying health conditions and people who live with or care for people at high risk for influenza-related complications.
- Since infants younger than 6 months of age are too young to get vaccinated against influenza, it is important that family members (including pregnant and postpartum mothers) and other caregivers for these children be vaccinated to help protect them from the disease.
- Children aged 6 months through 8 years require 2 doses of influenza vaccine (administered ≥ 4 weeks apart) *during their first season* of vaccination to optimize immune response.
- **Influenza is five times more likely to cause severe illness in pregnant women than women who are not pregnant.**
 - Changes in immune, heart and lung functions during pregnancy increase the risk for severe complications from influenza.
 - Pregnant women with underlying health conditions are at greater risk of serious illness from flu than their healthy counterparts.
 - Influenza infection also increases the risk for premature labor and delivery.
- **Inactivated influenza vaccines are safe and the best protection for pregnant women and their fetuses.**

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- Inactivated trivalent and quadrivalent influenza vaccines are indicated for use in pregnant women. Pregnancy is contraindicated for vaccination with live attenuated influenza vaccine, which is administered intranasally. Postpartum women, including those who are breastfeeding, can receive either type of vaccine.
- Vaccination is indicated at any time during the pregnancy.
- Vaccination during pregnancy has been shown to protect both the mother and her infant (up to 6 months of age) from influenza illness, influenza hospitalizations, and influenza related preterm birth.
- Inactivated influenza vaccines are safe. No evidence exists to suggest harm to the fetus from maternal vaccination.

Treatment and chemoprophylaxis:

Due to the detection of drifted influenza A (H3N2) viruses, the CDC issued a Health Advisory to re-emphasize the importance of the use of neuraminidase inhibitor antiviral medications when indicated for treatment and prevention of influenza, as an adjunct to vaccination.

In the event of influenza infection, antiviral treatment is recommended as early as possible after illness onset in children, pregnant women or other at-risk group with suspected influenza.

- Influenza antiviral prescription drugs can be used to treat influenza or to prevent influenza.
- Antiviral treatment is recommended as early as possible for any patient with confirmed or suspected influenza who is hospitalized; has severe, complicated, or progressive illness; or is at higher risk for influenza complications.
- **Delayed antiviral treatment (longer than 2 days) has been associated with increased risk of severe illness (such as hospitalization and death).**
- **Early treatment is important for pregnant women.**
 - Antiviral treatment is recommended as early as possible for pregnant or postpartum (within two weeks of delivery) women with confirmed or suspected influenza. Delayed antiviral treatment (longer than 2 days) has been associated with increased risk of severe illness (such as hospitalization and death). For recommendations of the ACIP on influenza antivirals and chemoprophylaxis visit:
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/index.htm>
- A flu test that is *negative by rapid antigen test* should not be used to exclude a diagnosis of influenza or delay treatment if it is suspect.
- The two prescription antiviral medications recommended for treatment or prevention of influenza are oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®).

Additionally, to reduce the spread of influenza, **please encourage your patients to stay home when sick**, keep children home when they are sick, as well as promote healthy habits such as washing hands often, keeping hands away from their face and covering their mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing and coughing or sneezing or coughing into a sleeve.

Contact your county health department <http://www.Floridahealth.gov/CHDEpiContact> if you suspect an outbreak of influenza or influenza-like illness, an influenza-associated pediatric mortality, if you see an unusually severe presentation of influenza or if you suspect anti-viral resistance in a patient. Influenza outbreaks and influenza-associated pediatric mortalities are required to be reported per Florida Administrative Code, Chapter 64D-3.