

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

March 14, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

The 2013-2014 flu season appears to have peaked, with 37 counties reporting decreased influenza activity in the week ending March 8, and another 28 counties indicating activity is at a plateau.

Overall this season has been typical, but early reports of severe morbidity and mortality associated with influenza A 2009 H1N1 infections among unvaccinated healthy adults, in particular pregnant women, were of concern. Since flu vaccination is the single most effective way to prevent flu-related illness and complications, the Florida Department of Health collaborated with the Agency for Health Care Administration to ensure reimbursement of influenza vaccination for Medicaid-eligible pregnant women. Reports of pregnant women with severe illness have slowed significantly since that accomplishment, but those at high risk for infection are still presenting to emergency departments and urgent care centers in lower numbers.

Please continue to encourage your patients to adopt and sustain healthy habits such as frequent hand washing to limit the spread of flu, and promote public health and patient safety by ensuring your clinic has a policy for vaccinating health care personnel.

For more information regarding flu recommendations and vaccine locators, visit Florida's influenza webpage at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/prevention-safety-and-wellness/flu-prevention/index.html>, Florida's Influenza Surveillance webpage at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/florida-influenza-weekly-surveillance.html>, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/index.htm>.

Thank you for your important contribution to the improvement of immunization rates in the communities you serve. I look forward to a continued partnership in reducing the morbidity and mortality of influenza, to make Florida the healthiest state in the nation.

Sincerely,



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

Florida Department of Health

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