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FLORIDA HEALTH URGES VACCINATION AS FLU SEASON INTENSIFIES



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TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— With the 2016-2017 flu season in full swing and influenza activity increasing across the state, it is critical that all Floridians get the flu vaccine to protect against infection and help prevent the spread of seasonal flu to others. It is never too late to get your flu shot. While most cases of flu are mild, there are exceptions. The department has confirmed the first two influenza-associated pediatric deaths of the 2016-2017 flu season in a 7 year-old and a 17 year-old.

“We are saddened by this news and our thoughts are with the family and friends of these children,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. Celeste Philip. “Although most people view the flu as a minimal threat, Floridians should take flu infection seriously as it can cause severe illness, even death, in some cases. Getting your flu shot is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu. If you have not yet received a flu shot, it is not too late.”

Flu activity is on the rise in Florida, particularly in groups at high risk for severe illness such as children, pregnant women, people with underlying chronic conditions and people over the age of 65. Visits to emergency departments for influenza are also increasing in these high risk groups. The department continues to urge residents to reduce their risk of severe illness from infection by getting vaccinated against influenza. This is especially important for individuals at high-risk for severe illness.

The annual flu vaccine is safe and is the most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older, including pregnant women. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection against the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends people get injectable flu shots. Nasal spray vaccine is not recommended for this flu season because of concerns about its effectiveness.

It is also essential to practice good hygiene by properly and frequently washing your hands to help prevent the spread of seasonal flu. Make it a habit to clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces in your home, school or office. You can take additional steps to ward off the flu by coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and avoiding touching your face.

The flu vaccine is offered in many convenient locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, retail stores, pharmacies, health centers and by many employers and schools. Visit the department's flu shot locator [page](#) to search for a flu vaccine location near you.

For further information regarding influenza surveillance information, messaging and guidance, visit the influenza homepage at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/floridaflu>.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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