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603-271-4051

Plenty of Seasonal Vaccine Available to Anyone Over Six Months Old

Concord, NH - The annual influenza (flu) season is about to start and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is encouraging all residents to consider getting immunized against the flu, especially those who are at increased risk of complications from the flu. This year's vaccine, which contains the H1N1 strain as well as two others, is for the first time recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to anyone over the age of six months.

"DHHS has begun accepting orders for vaccine from providers for children who are served under our immunization program," said Dr. José Montero. "We are encouraging everyone to get a flu vaccine this year, even if they received the H1N1 vaccine last year, to help maintain their level of immunity. Flu seasons are unpredictable and we want everyone to be protected."

Influenza is a serious disease of the lungs, nose and throat. The illness is spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. Typical flu symptoms include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. An average of 22,000 people die each year in the United States due to influenza.

The flu season can last from October through May, so the CDC and DHHS are encouraging people to be vaccinated whenever they can, even if it is after the initial push in the fall. The vaccine is available in the traditional shot form for people six months of age and older. Flu vaccine in a nasal mist form is available for people aged 2-49 years who are not pregnant.

"It is important to understand that the vaccine itself does not give you the flu and that it is very safe," continued Dr. Montero. "It is especially important that certain targeted groups be vaccinated for their own safety, however other groups, such as health care providers, should receive the vaccine to protect others. If you won't do it for yourself, get vaccinated for someone you care for or about."

The following groups are at increased risk and should definitely receive a flu vaccine every year:

- Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday

- Pregnant women

- People 50 years of age or older

- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, including asthma or heart disease, or those who are immune compromised

- People who live with or care for those at high risk of flu complications, including:

 - Health care workers

Household contacts of persons at high risk of complications from the flu

Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children younger than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

Those who should not be vaccinated are:

People with a severe allergy to chicken eggs

People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past

People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of previous influenza vaccination

Children younger than 6 months of age (the vaccine has not been approved for that age group)

People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

For more information on influenza and the vaccine, contact the NH Immunization Program at 800-852-3345 ext. 4482 or 603-271-4482 or the Communicable Disease Surveillance Section at 800-852-3345 ext. 0279 or 603-271-0279. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov for more information or the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov. To find a flu clinic close to you visit www.findaflushot.com or call 211.

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