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National Influenza Vaccination Week is Jan. 10-16; more county venues offered for free H1N1 vaccines

Sarasota County will join health departments across the nation in recognizing National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) Jan. 10-16. NIVW is a national observance that was established to highlight the importance of continuing influenza vaccination after the holiday season and beyond.

Traditionally, the time to get a flu shot is September, continuing into the winter through January. This year, with the uncertainty of the H1N1 flu virus, the season may extend beyond the winter months. Almost all of the flu viruses identified since November 2009 in the U.S. have been the H1N1.

“Getting vaccinated is our best protection against the H1N1 flu virus,” said Chuck Henry, incident commander for the Sarasota County H1N1 response. “As a Health Department, it’s our responsibility to provide the H1N1 flu vaccine to any Sarasota County resident who wants to receive it. There is no cost involved for residents, and we will continue to do so as long as we feel there is a need and/or a concern on the part of our residents.”

In conjunction with NIVW, the Sarasota County Health Department is expanding its own outreach campaign for county residents by adding the following events to its regular weekday vaccine clinics:

- The Health Department will offer free H1N1 flu shots from its Health in Motion Mobile Medical Unit, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 9, and Sunday, Jan. 9, at Payne Park in downtown Sarasota during the Thunder by the Bay bike rally. For details on the location, visit <http://www.thunderbythebay.org>.
- The Health Department also will offer free H1N1 flu shots from its Health in Motion Mobile Medical unit, from noon-5 p.m. Monday, Jan. 18, at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park in north Sarasota, during the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day community event.

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- After Jan. 20, a nurse will come to any workplace in Sarasota County that signs up 20 or more employees for an H1N1 flu vaccination, and administer the vaccine at no cost. Employees and their families are eligible.
- The Health Department is partnering with community and faith-based groups in Sarasota County to provide free H1N1 vaccinations. Call 941-861-2678 to schedule a free clinic.

Health Department vaccine clinics throughout Sarasota County remain open to the general public. Call 941-861-2800, or visit www.sarasotahealth.org for locations and clinic hours.

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