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MEDIA NOTE: A list of [One-Time Flu Shot Clinics for the Public](#) is provided online at www.sarasotahealth.org. [Click here](#) for a short public service announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention entitled, "I never get the flu."

Communities join together with flu vaccination reminder

The Sarasota County Health Department will join health departments across the nation in recognizing National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW) Dec. 5–11 as a way to promote flu vaccination for all people over 6 months of age before the traditional winter peak in flu activity in late January.

With the winter holiday season approaching, health officials expect to see a surge in flu-related illnesses in communities. Unlike the common cold, respiratory flu can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications, even in healthy younger people and pregnant women. In rare instances, death occurs.

Therefore, a big push of NIVW this season is to reach people of all ages with the message that "Flu Ends With U," and that getting vaccinated not only protects you from the flu, but it can also prevent you from spreading it to friends and family as well.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu vaccine is the best defense against the seasonal flu and has a very good safety record.

Health officials say that you should be vaccinated each flu season.

"If you were vaccinated earlier this year with the H1N1 flu vaccine, you will need to get vaccinated again," says Sarasota County Health Department Medical Director William Heymann, M.D. "The reason is that the protection wanes over time and two new flu viruses are included in this season's flu vaccine. The protection you receive from a flu vaccine begins about two weeks after getting vaccinated and continues throughout the flu season."

[Flu shots](#) are readily available in the community through partner organizations in the Sarasota County Flu and Pneumonia Coalition. Unlike last year, there is a cost for the shots. Healthy individuals between ages 2-49 have the option of getting the no-shot nasal mist version of the seasonal flu vaccine.

Parents who lack health insurance can bring their children from 6 months through age 18 to the Sarasota County Health Department for free flu vaccinations through the federally funded Vaccines for Children (VFC) program.

VFC-eligible children may receive flu shots as well as immunizations required for day care and school entry at the Sarasota County Health Department's clinics in Sarasota and Venice as follows:

Sarasota County Health Department

Children's Immunization Clinic
2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota
Open Monday-Friday
Call 941-861-2784 for hours.

South County Family Health Center

South County Resource Center (just north of Manatee Community College)
7820 S. Tamiami Trail, #B2, Venice
Open Monday-Friday
Call 941-861-3338 for hours.

Parents are reminded that children younger than 9 years of age who have not previously been vaccinated against the flu will need two doses of the flu vaccine, given a month apart, for full protection.

No appointment is needed for children's immunizations. However, a parent or guardian must be present, and must bring prior immunization records.

These simple steps can help to prevent someone from contracting or spreading the flu:

- **Get a seasonal flu vaccine every year.**
- **Wash your hands** frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- **Cover your coughs** and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue, or the inside of your elbow -- not your bare hand.
- **Stay at home** when you are sick. Keep sick children home. Stay home until free from fever at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

Call the Sarasota County Health Department's flu information line at 941-861-2800 or visit the website, www.sarasotahealth.org, for a list of locations of community flu shot clinics and their associated cost. This information is also available on touch-screen health kiosks at the Sarasota County Health Department, Senior Friendship Centers and all local libraries. Hearing-impaired persons can contact the Sarasota County Call Center, TDD line, at 941-861-1833.

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