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## **Drive-thru seasonal flu vaccine clinic to be held Oct. 22**

A drive-thru flu vaccine clinic will take place at The Tabernacle Church in north Sarasota on Saturday, Oct. 22, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Organizers ask that everyone only use the entrance located on University Parkway at Tabernacle Drive, just east of Whitfield Avenue in north Sarasota.

“The drive-thru is a good option for people using oxygen or who have difficulty walking, parents with small children, and anyone who prefers the drive-thru convenience,” said Joan Surso, a registered nurse and Sarasota County Health Department community adult immunization coordinator.

This venue is also intended to serve as a test site for the county’s drive-thru response plan intended to protect the public from any future infectious disease pandemics, as well as bioterrorism or other public health threats. Health officials say that the drive-thru distribution is one of several methods of getting people medications or vaccinations as quickly as possible to help reduce the impact of a large outbreak of illness in Sarasota County.

During this event, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and community volunteers from The Tabernacle Church will be trained and provided the opportunity to assist in evaluating traffic flow, communications and other aspects of the drive-thru vaccination clinic.

“Community volunteers, including the MRC, are essential to the successful operation of our response plans,” said Tammi Ketcham, Sarasota County Health Department public health preparedness planner and trainer who also coordinates the Medical Reserve Corps.

An authorization form is required to receive a vaccine at this drive-thru clinic. These forms are available online at [www.sarasotahealth.org/flu](http://www.sarasotahealth.org/flu) and completed in advance. Forms will be provided on-site the day of the drive-thru for anyone who needs one.

Sarasota Health Care Services, which is the provider of the flu vaccines, will handle the billing for people whose primary insurance is Medicare. Individuals must present their Medicare card to receive the flu or pneumonia vaccine at no charge. People whose primary insurance is a Medicare HMO will be required to bring a copy of the front and back of their insurance card so their insurance company can be billed. In those instances, there will be no charge for the vaccines. All other individuals should bring a copy of the front and back of their insurance card, and the vaccine provider will check it for billing. The cost is \$25 for the flu vaccine and \$70 for the pneumonia vaccine for people of all ages with or without other insurance. A receipt will be given upon request.

“Children under age 5 and adults 65 years of age and older are most likely to experience complications from the flu,” said Surso. Since babies under 6 months are too young to get a flu

shot, all members of their households and close contacts, including grandparents and daycare providers, should get vaccinated. This protects the infants by preventing those around them from getting ill.”

Pneumonia is often a complication from the flu. Health officials say that usually a one-time-only pneumonia vaccine is needed for people over age 65, unless the person has certain chronic conditions. People should ask their health care provider if they should get the pneumonia vaccine. Pneumonia vaccines will be available at this drive-thru site.

Other ways to prevent the flu include:

- Cover your face and nose when you cough or sneeze with tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- Wash hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay home when sick and keep sick children home until free from fever for at least 24 hours, without fever-reducing medications.

For a schedule of seasonal flu shot clinics, call the Sarasota County Health Department’s flu information line at 941-861-2800 or visit the website, [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org). This information is also available on touch-screen health kiosks at all the local libraries. Those who are hearing-impaired can call the Sarasota County Call Center, TDD line, at 941-861-1833.

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