

# SCGOVHEALTH

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**MEDIA NOTE:** Visit <http://newsroom.doh.state.fl.us/2011/10/07/flu-season-interview/> for a flu interview featured on the Florida Department of Health Online Newsroom.

## **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. 4-10. The effort is 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 and February.

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.

“You need to get vaccinated every year because the immune protection declines over time,” says Sarasota County Health Department Medical Director William Heymann, M.D. “The protection you receive from a flu vaccine begins about two weeks after getting vaccinated and continues throughout the flu season.”

Flu shots are still readily available in the community. Healthy individuals between the ages of 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 ages 6 months through 18 years old 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 at the following times and locations:

**Sarasota County Health Department**

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

**North Port Health Center**

6950 Outreach Way, North Port  
Open Monday-Friday  
Call 941-861-3864 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.

The CDC campaign says "Take 3" Actions to Fight the Flu:

**1) Take time to get the flu vaccine**

**2) Take everyday precautions to prevent the spread of the germs**

- **Wash your hands** frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner. For more information and downloadable hand washing reminders, visit [www.cleanhandscampaign.com](http://www.cleanhandscampaign.com)
- **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).

**3) Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.**

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), and click on the flu shots button, for a list of locations where flu shots are being given 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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