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NEWSROOM

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

E-NEWSLETTER

EVENT CALENDAR

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Media contact:

Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058; Dianne.Shipley@FLHealth.gov

Protect yourself and others from the flu this season

SARASOTA COUNTY — The Florida Department of Health and the County Health Departments of West Central Florida remind residents and visitors to protect themselves and others from the flu this season. Flu shots are widely available throughout the region and getting an annual flu vaccine is the most important step for protection against flu viruses.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cases of influenza increase during the winter season and will traditionally peak during January and February. While everyone should get a flu vaccine this season, it's especially important for some people to get vaccinated.

Those people include the following:

- People who are at high risk of developing serious complications (like pneumonia) if they get sick with the flu.
 - People who have certain medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, and chronic lung disease.
 - Pregnant women.
 - People younger than 5 years (and especially those younger than 2), and people 65 years and older.
- People who live with or care for others who are at high risk of developing serious complications (see list above).
 - Household contacts and caregivers of people with certain medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, and chronic lung disease.
 - Household contacts and caregivers of infants less than 6 months old.
 - Health care personnel.

The Florida Department of Health encourages residents and visitors to contact their private healthcare provider or get vaccinated at a local walk-in service or health department. Many pharmacies offer flu vaccines for a low-cost. To find a flu vaccine provider nearest you, go to <http://flushot.healthmap.org/> and search by city or zip code.

To help people stay healthy this flu season, the Florida Department of Health recommends:

- Washing hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Trying to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Getting revaccinated every year because flu viruses change.

Symptoms of the flu that should be monitored include headache, fever, severe cough, runny nose, or muscle aches. People who are sick with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever has subsided, without the use of fever-reducing medicine, except to get medical care. Individuals with a chronic illness, or who are pregnant,

should contact their healthcare provider if they suspect their illness might be influenza. Healthcare providers can prescribe proper antiviral medication.

To learn more about the flu, please visit the www.flu.gov, or the Florida Department of Health's website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/floridaflu/>.

The Florida Department of Health's mission is to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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