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E-NEWSLETTER

EVENT CALENDAR

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Getting a flu shot is your best defense against several viruses

SARASOTA COUNTY— The approaching winter season brings an expected increase in seasonal flu viruses. Getting a flu shot is your best defense against several influenza viruses.

“Having a bout with the flu can interrupt your life for five to seven days, preventing you from working and caring for loved ones, and may even require hospitalization,” said Joan Surso, Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County Community Adult Immunization coordinator. “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 6 months and older get their yearly flu vaccine as the best defense against influenza.”

This year’s seasonal flu vaccine protects against three flu viruses, two “A” viruses, including the 2009 H1N1-like virus, and one “B” virus. A new quadrivalent vaccine option is available this year that provides protection against four flu viruses; the vaccine also protects against an additional B virus. It is available for both children and adults and is administered through the regular injectable vaccine and the nasal-spray live vaccine.

The CDC urges everyone to get vaccinated each flu season since immune protection declines over time, said Surso. Getting the flu vaccine helps provide optimal protection against the commonly circulating flu viruses, which are a potential threat to health in those who are unable to get vaccinated.

Only one dose of vaccine is needed for most people. For full protection, children ages 6 months to 8 years of age who receive a flu vaccination for the first time should receive a second dose of vaccine at least four weeks later. The nasal- spray flu vaccine is an option for healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

People who have asthma or who are caregivers to individuals with a weakened immune system should only get the injectable form of the flu vaccine, according to health officials.

People who get vaccinated against seasonal flu can expect to have immunity within two weeks of vaccination. The protection you get from the vaccine will continue throughout the flu season.

Influenza is very contagious. People with certain health conditions (asthma, diabetes, heart disease, suppressed immune system and other health issues) are also at high-risk for [pneumonia](#) and other potentially life-threatening complications following a bout with the flu.

“Children under age of 5 and adults 65 years of age and older are most likely to experience complications from the flu,” said Surso. Pregnant women are another extremely high-risk group and the CDC recommends that they receive a dose of flu vaccine as soon as they learn they are pregnant, or even in anticipation of becoming pregnant.

Babies younger than 6 months are too young to get a flu shot; all members of their household and close contacts, including daycare providers and grandparents, should get vaccinated, according to health officials. This protects the infants by preventing those around them from getting ill.

As people age, their immune system's function tends to decrease. This makes older adults not only more susceptible to infections, but also less responsive to the standard-dose flu vaccination. The CDC continues to recommend the Fluzone High-Dose vaccine for adults 65 years of age and older, as it is designed to generate a stronger immune response in older adults. This is a payable benefit through Medicare Part B. For additional information, people should contact their health care provider.

DOH-Sarasota offers flu vaccines at no cost to eligible children ages 2-18 years. The cost for others varies from \$30 to \$37 depending on the specific vaccine administered. The high-dose vaccine for those 65 and older is \$47.42. Pneumonia vaccine is also available for about \$83.

Cash or check is accepted and, in many cases, credit or debit cards. People who have Medicare B need to bring a copy of their card to receive the vaccine with no out-of-pocket cost.

Flu and pneumonia vaccinations are currently available at the following DOH-Sarasota locations:

North Port Health Center

6950 Outreach Way

Monday - Friday: 7-11 a.m. and 1-5 p.m.

Tuesday: 7-11 a.m. and 2-5 p.m.

941-861-3864

Closed weekends

Adults and children 6 months of age and older

William L. Little Health & Human Services Center

2200 Ringling Blvd, Sarasota

Monday - Friday: 8 -11:30 a.m. and 1-4:30 p.m.

Tuesday: 8-11 a.m. and 3-4:30 p.m.

Closed weekends

941-861-2900

Adults and children 6 months of age and older

In addition to getting a vaccination (flu shot), people can help protect themselves against the flu by following these simple steps:

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
2. Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow or a tissue, or the inside of your elbow, not your bare hand.
3. Stay at home when you are sick. Keep sick children home. Stay home until you have been free from fever at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

For more information, call the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County's Flu Information line at 941-861-2800 or visit:

- <http://sarasotahealth.org>
- <http://flushot.healthmap.org/>.

This information is also available for those who do not have access to a computer at touch-screen health kiosks at the William L. Little Health & Human Services Center in Sarasota, Senior Friendship Centers and all local libraries. Those who are hearing-impaired can call the Sarasota County Call Center, TTY number: 7-1-1 or 1-800-955-8771.

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