

October 1, 2014



## Protect yourself and others from flu

*Get your flu vaccine before Halloween*

SARASOTA COUNTY— The current fall and approaching winter season brings an expected increase in seasonal flu viruses. The Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota) reminds people to get a flu vaccine as your best defense against several flu viruses.

The peak of the flu season occurred earlier than usual last year – in December rather than during January and February. To ensure that everyone who is able to get a flu vaccine is protected, residents are encouraged to *get their flu vaccine before Halloween*.

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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months of age and older get vaccinated each year since immune protection declines over time. This includes children under five, adults over age 65, healthy people, those living with chronic health conditions, health care providers, and pregnant women, who are at risk of miscarriage, hospitalization and even death if they get the flu.

We are armed with an effective vaccine to prevent the flu which claims between 3,000 and 49,000 lives in any given year and hospitalizes many more unvaccinated people,” says DOH-Sarasota Medical Executive Director Dr. William Heymann. “Getting the flu vaccine helps provide optimal protection against the commonly circulating flu viruses. I got my flu vaccine in a public way today to encourage other health care providers who are on the front line to get vaccinated.”

According to the CDC, only half of all pregnant women received a flu vaccine last year. However, the vaccine is safe and effective and can be given at any time during pregnancy.

Eboni Corprew, the Florida Epidemic Intelligence Service Fellow at DOH Sarasota said, “I decided to get my flu vaccine on camera today in order to remind pregnant women of the importance of protecting themselves as well as the health of their unborn baby. I am due in December and getting my flu shot now will ensure that I am able to protect my baby from the flu for up to the first six months of his life. This is important because children younger than six months are unable to get the flu vaccine.”



Eboni Corprew getting prepped for flu vaccine given by Donna Keith

Corprew also says, “When you go to your doctor for care, ask them about the recommended vaccines for pregnancy and get them — even if you are referred somewhere else. Getting your vaccine before Halloween will ensure that you and your newborn are protected before the height of this year’s flu season.”

“Only one dose of vaccine is needed for most people. 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,” says DOH-Sarasota Immunization Program Director Donna Keith.

In addition to getting a vaccination (flu shot), you can help protect yourself 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. Dispose of used tissues, and wash hands.
3. 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).

**For more information about flu and where to get a flu vaccine:**

DOH-Sarasota website at [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org)

Flu Information Line that provides recorded information, 941-861-2800.

Florida Department of Health’s (Department) website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/floridaflu/>.

Department’s Online Newsroom: <http://newsroom.doh.state.fl.us/>

Find a Flu Shot Locator: <http://flushot.healthmap.org/>.

Those who are hearing-impaired can call the Sarasota County Contact Center, TTY number: 7-1-1 or 1-800-955-8771.

The DOH-Sarasota is part of a statewide network of county health departments that work to protect, promote and improve the health of residents and visitors through integrated state, county and community efforts.

-30-

Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, familial status, religion, or genetic information. Persons with disabilities who require assistance or alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.), or who wish to file a complaint, should contact Sarasota County ADA/ Civil Rights Coordinator, 1660 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota, Florida 34236. Phone: 941-861-5000, TTY 7-1-1 or 1-800-955-8771; email: [adacoordinator@scgov.net](mailto:adacoordinator@scgov.net)

---

**MEDIA NOTES:**

**DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:**

Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058; [DOHSarasotaNews@FLHealth.gov](mailto:DOHSarasotaNews@FLHealth.gov)

Website: [www.sarasotahealth.org](http://www.sarasotahealth.org)