

Health and Welfare Alert
Preventing the Flu #31-11-14**Purpose**

The purpose of this Alert is to encourage all individuals and caregivers to be vaccinated for the flu. **The single best way to protect against the Flu is to get vaccinated each fall.** *Note: The flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May and typically peaks in January or February. Vaccinations should occur as soon as possible, ideally in October.* Routine annual vaccination is recommended for all persons 6 months and older.

All DD Employees are required to be trained, annually, on identification and reporting of Major Unusual Incidents and Unusual Incidents prior to direct contact. This training includes the review of any **Health and Welfare Alerts** released since the previous calendar year's training.

For questions / comments, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

What is Seasonal Influenza?

Seasonal influenza, also known as the flu, is a viral illness that causes fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion and body aches. It is usually spread from person to person by coughing and sneezing.

According to the Ohio Department of Health, most people who get the flu usually recover in one to two weeks, but the flu can be deadly. An estimated 200,000 people are hospitalized with the flu each year in the U.S. On average, it is estimated that there are more than 20,000 flu related deaths. Not all of these deaths are directly related to the flu but many are – and possibly could be prevented with a flu vaccine.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Time is here! The seasonal influenza vaccine is formulated to protect against the two Influenza A strains (H1N1 and H1N3) and the Influenza B strain of flu that public health researchers believe will be the most common during the upcoming season.

The 2014-2015 U.S. Trivalent Vaccine contains:

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- A/Texas/50/2012(H3N2)-like virus;
- B/Massachusetts 2/2012

There is a vaccine that addresses a fourth flu-
Quadrivalent B/Brisbane /60/2008

A variety of influenza vaccine products are available starting in 2014-2015. For many recipients more than one brand may be appropriate. If you have questions, check with your doctor.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends use of nasal spray vaccine in healthy children age two through eight, if the child has no contraindications.



Children age six months through eight years may need two doses.

Persons, who live with or care for others, at high risk of flu-related complications, should be vaccinated if possible. This includes household contacts of people with asthma, COPD and diabetes and caregivers of children six months or younger. Also health care personnel should be vaccinated, if possible.

People at High Risk for Developing Flu-Related Complications:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old(<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/parents/index.htm>)
- Adults 65 years of age and older(<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/65over.htm>)
- Pregnant women(<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>)
- Also, American Indians and Alaskan Natives seem to be at higher risk of flu complications
- People who certain medical conditions - Asthma; COPD; Diabetes; Neurological and Neurodevelopmental conditions; kidney disorders and others.

Who should not be vaccinated? There are some people who should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. These include:

- Children under 6 months of age
- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs. If a person reports egg allergy, check with a doctor as there are new vaccines this year. The doctor can evaluate needs.
- People with history of severe allergic reaction to the Influenza vaccine in the past or any component of the vaccine which includes a gelatin, antibiotics and other ingredients.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously. Discuss your GBS history with your physician.

Talk to your doctor about your symptoms before receiving the shot.

Note: Consult your doctor before receiving the LAIV, Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine

Flu Shot Vaccine Side Effects

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

Nasal Spray Vaccine Side Effects

- In Children- Runny nose, headache, wheezing, vomiting and fever
- In Adults-Runny nose, headache, sore throat and cough

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last one or two days. Most people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. However, on rare occasions, flu vaccination can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

Good health habits are also an important way to help prevent the flu.

It is important for staff to model these behaviors and to teach, encourage and assist with these practices routinely.

1. **Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, too,
2. **Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
3. **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cough or sneeze into your sleeve to avoid spreading viruses by your hands and in the air.
4. **Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

If you get the flu, antiviral drugs are a treatment option. Check with your doctor promptly if you have a high risk condition and you get flu symptoms. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Your doctor may prescribe drugs to treat your flu illness.

More Info:

If you do not have a personal physician, local Health Departments often offer flu shots at a reasonable cost. When obtaining your annual flu vaccine, ask your physician if you qualify for the pneumonia vaccine also. Many local pharmacies also offer convenient reasonably priced flu shots and will process payment through your insurance if available.

Ohio Department of Health
<http://www.odh.ohio.gov/features/odhfeatures/seasflu/seasonalinfluenza.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

For Questions or Comments

For questions or comments regarding this alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit.

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