



NEWS

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Illinois Department of Public Health

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Annual Flu Season is Coming – Get Your Flu Shot

New form of influenza vaccination this year

SPRINGFIELD, ILL. – Influenza vaccine is starting to arrive at local health departments, pharmacies and health care facilities around the state. The Illinois Department of Public Health, along with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is recommending people get vaccinated as soon as possible.

“I encourage everyone six months and older to be vaccinated against influenza as soon as possible as the vaccine takes about two weeks to provide protection against influenza,” Illinois Department of Public Health Dr. Damon T. Arnold said. “Even if you received a flu shot last year, it is important to be vaccinated every year because the effectiveness of the vaccine declines over the course of a year after vaccination.”

The annual influenza vaccine includes three virus strains and typically one, or all three strains, change from year to year. However, surveillance showed the same viruses we saw last year continue to be the predominant strains circulating this year, therefore the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) chose the same three strains for this year’s vaccine. Despite the vaccine being the same, for optimal protection against influenza, it is still important to be vaccinated again this year as the effectiveness of last year’s vaccination is decreasing.

To be protected, children ages six months through eight years need two doses of influenza vaccine during their first flu season. However, if children in this age group received at least one dose of vaccine last year, they will only need one dose this year because the vaccine has not changed. This year is an exception.

“Every flu season is different and people are affected by the flu differently. Even healthy children and adults can become very sick from the flu,” Illinois Department of Public Health Immunization Section Chief Karen McMahon said. “There are some people who cannot be vaccinated, such as babies younger than six months and those who are allergic to the vaccine. That’s why it is important for those of us who can be vaccinated, to do so and protect those vulnerable populations who could become seriously ill.”

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There is a new type of flu shot this year called Fluzone Intradermal. This intradermal shot injects a smaller amount of vaccine just under the skin, as opposed to the regular flu shot, which injects the vaccine into the muscle. For adults who don't like needles, the intradermal vaccine is given using a needle that is 90 percent smaller than a regular flu shot needle. Fluzone is only recommended for adults, ages 18-64 years. The influenza vaccine is also available in a nasal spray. None of the three forms of vaccine causes influenza.

This year's flu vaccine is made in the same way as past flu vaccines and has been approved by the FDA. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, an average of 100 million doses of influenza vaccine has been used in the United States each year and has an excellent safety record.

It is not too early to get your flu shot. You can be vaccinated in September and be protected throughout the entire flu season. The season typically runs from October through May with the peak in January.

To reduce the spread of influenza and other contagious diseases, it is always important to practice the 3 C's –

- **Clean** – properly wash your hands frequently
- **Cover** – cover your cough and sneeze
- **Contain** – contain your germs by staying home if you are sick

For more information, log onto www.idph.state.il.us/flu/index.htm.

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