



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 11, 2011

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MDCH, MOA, and MSMS Urge Residents to Get Flu Vaccine for Entire Family
Michigan 45th Nationwide for Flu Vaccination Coverage of Children 4 and Under

LANSING – No matter how healthy someone may be, every one has a chance of getting a severe case of the flu, young children and adults alike. Last year’s flu season led to 115 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated pediatric deaths reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), six were Michigan children.

In Michigan, a little more than half (51.2 percent) of children 6 months through 4 years were vaccinated against influenza last flu season, which ranks our state 45th in the nation. Data from the 2010-11 flu season indicate the national flu vaccine coverage level for children in that age group was 63.6 percent.

“Even though flu-related deaths in children and teenagers may seem uncommon, many of these deaths could have been prevented through vaccination,” said Olga Dazzo, Director of the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH). “Flu vaccines are safe and effective. Ample supplies are currently available at your health care provider’s office, local health department, pharmacy or community clinic.”

It is especially important to get vaccinated now as influenza has already been confirmed in Michigan this season. On Oct. 5, the MDCH Bureau of Laboratories confirmed two influenza cases in southeast Michigan: an influenza B infection in a healthy young adult and an influenza A/H3 infection in an adult.

The good news is that there are a number of places where residents can get the flu vaccine, including local health departments, vaccination clinics, doctors' offices, retail pharmacies, and some schools and workplaces. Visit www.michigan.gov/flu to locate your local health department or access the Flu Vaccine Locator.

Every flu season is unique and has the potential to be severe, not only for children but also adults. The MDCH and CDC recommend an annual flu vaccine for everyone 6 months and older as the first and best way to protect against influenza.

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"Not only is it important for our patients to get vaccinated, but it's also critical that physicians and other health care providers get vaccinated," stated Michigan State Medical Society President Steven E. Newman, MD, a Southfield neurologist. "Annual immunization of health care professionals protects employees, their families and their patients, and it may reduce influenza-related deaths among persons at high risk for complications from influenza."

Infants younger than 6 months are too young to be vaccinated. Protect them from the dangers of influenza by making sure parents, siblings, grandparents, babysitters, and anyone in close contact with infants are fully vaccinated. It's also important for pregnant women to get vaccinated against the flu, as the vaccine protects both the mother and unborn baby.

"With the flu season already off to a start, getting the flu vaccine soon will provide the body a chance to build up immunity to, or protection from, the virus." said Joseph S. Kozlowski, DO of Lansing. "A nasal mist vaccine is now available for healthy, non-pregnant people between the ages of 2 and 49 years. Check with your doctor to see if this option is available."

Most insurance plans cover the influenza vaccine. If you have a new policy beginning on or after Sept. 23, 2010, the vaccine must be covered without a copayment or co-insurance only when the service is delivered by a network provider. Check with your provider to see if your coverage extends to the influenza vaccine and where you can have it administered in your network.

MDCH's Vaccines for Children (VFC) program gives childhood vaccines to eligible children in families who are in need of affordable immunizations. In VFC, doctors and clinics enroll in VFC and give vaccines to children who qualify. Check with your doctor or your local health department to see if they participate in the VFC program. For more information on the VFC program, visit www.michigan.gov/vfc.

"Getting a flu vaccine is easy, and it is the first and most important step you can take in protecting yourself and your loved ones from getting the flu," said Dean Sienko, Interim Chief Medical Executive at the MDCH. "While flu seasons are unpredictable, flu vaccination is the single best way to protect against influenza, especially for those under 5 years of age."

For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/flu.

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