

## NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

Contact: Jeff Golden (608) 243-0302

Flu Season is Coming Soon

It's not too Late – Get your Flu Vaccine Today!

Madison WI – December 7, 2015 – Have you gotten your flu shot yet? In case you think that it is too late for that, you should consider that as long as flu viruses are spreading (which they are), it is definitely not too late to get a vaccine to protect yourself and your loved ones.

“Flu season typically peaks between December and February,” says Kate Louther, manager of immunization programs for PHMDC (Public Health-Madison and Dane County). “We are encouraging people who have not yet been vaccinated this season to get vaccinated now.”

Those who believe that getting the flu is no worse than getting a bad cold should know that for millions of people every season, the flu can mean fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue, and miserable days spent in bed. It also means that flu is responsible for hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and thousands or sometimes tens of thousands of deaths. In Wisconsin so far this season, flu has been responsible for 22 hospitalizations - but it's still early. Last season there were 411 hospitalizations in Dane County.

Some people are at high risk for serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia, that can lead to hospitalization and even death. This includes young children, pregnant women, people 65 and older and people with certain medical conditions, like asthma, diabetes or heart disease.

The flu vaccine offers significant protection against getting the flu. While how well the vaccine works can vary, the benefits from vaccination are well documented. Studies show that flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations. This is why CDC recommends flu vaccine for everyone 6 months and older every year. Flu vaccine is available as a shot and as a nasal spray. The most important thing is that you get vaccinated, not necessarily which vaccine you get. Talk to your doctor or other health care professional about which vaccine is best for you and your family.

For those at high risk for complications, getting the flu vaccine is especially important. It's also important to get the vaccine if you care for anyone at high risk, including babies younger than 6 months because they are too young to get the vaccine. To learn more about high risk conditions, visit [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high\\_risk.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm).

Most health insurance plans cover the cost of recommended vaccines given at the clinic, pharmacy or work site. Check with your insurance provider for details of coverage. PHMDC provides flu vaccine free for anyone without health insurance. Call (608) 266-4821 to make an appointment.

There are also vouchers for free flu vaccine at Walgreens for those without insurance. Call (608) 266-4821 to request a voucher and it will be mailed to you.

If you do not currently have health insurance, visit [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.HealthCare.gov) to learn more about affordable health coverage options.

For more detailed information about the flu, visit the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

Don't let the flu spoil your holidays. Get the vaccine now.

An online version of this release is available at <http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/flu-season-is-coming-soon>