



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Influenza is a serious disease; flu shots recommended for those 6 months of age and older

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Karen Landers, M.D., F.A.A.P.
(256) 246-1714

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) encourages annual vaccination of all persons 6 months of age and older against influenza. One major change for the 2016-2017 season is that children and adults should receive a flu shot instead of nasal spray vaccine. This national recommendation was made because the nasal spray vaccine did not work well for the past three flu seasons.

"It is important for parents to protect their children and themselves by taking flu shots. My advice as a physician is to immunize all eligible family members," Assistant State Health Officer Dr. Karen Landers said. "The consequences of influenza are worse in certain age groups, both young and old. An annual flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting individuals and the community against this serious disease."

Over a period of 31 seasons between 1976 and 2007, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people. During recent flu seasons, between 80 and 90 percent of flu-related deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older.

"Flu season" in the United States can begin as early as October and end as late as May. During this time, flu viruses are circulating at higher rates. A person with the flu may have some or all of these symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and often extreme fatigue.

An annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to reduce the chances of getting flu and spreading it to others. Vaccination can reduce the risk of influenza-associated hospitalizations for children and adults. It is also associated with a lowered risk of hospitalizations for people with chronic health conditions including heart disease, diabetes and chronic lung disease. Vaccination also helps protect women during and after pregnancy.

In addition to immunization, the public is reminded to follow basic infection control measures to help prevent the spread of the flu. These include covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or cloth when coughing and sneezing, washing hands frequently, and staying at home when sick.

Contact your private physician or your local county health department for a flu clinic schedule. For more information, contact the ADPH Immunization Division at (334) 206-5023 or toll free at 800-469-4599.

-30-

10/4/16