

January XX, 2020

Dear Parents:

The Florida Department of Health reports influenza activity levels have increased notably over the last few weeks. **The Florida Department of Health is encouraging families to get vaccinated for influenza as soon as possible. Influenza vaccines are safe and the best way to protect against influenza and its potentially severe complications.**

Influenza can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of influenza infection can result in hospitalization or death. Some people, such as young children, the elderly, and people with certain health conditions are at higher risk for serious complications from influenza. Some children are at especially high risk for influenza-related complications: children less than five years old, American Indian and Alaskan Native children, and children with chronic health problems.

While rare, influenza-associated pediatric deaths are reported each season, most often in unvaccinated children with underlying health conditions. Last season, six influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported in Florida, and all six occurred in children who were not fully vaccinated. Influenza vaccination has been shown to significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from flu. For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/parents.htm.

The best ways to protect your child and your family during influenza season are to:

1. Get vaccinated.
2. Keep sick family members home.
3. Contact your health care provider if you or your child are experiencing flu-like symptoms (common symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, and headache).
4. Follow your physician's guidance on treatment.
5. Take additional steps to prevent flu by staying away from people who are sick, frequently washing your hands with soap and warm water, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth as much as possible.

Annual influenza vaccination is crucial for children with underlying health conditions including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions. Children less than six months old are too young to be vaccinated, which is why it is so important to make sure the people around them are vaccinated.

Influenza vaccines are offered in many locations including pharmacies, clinics, employers, and schools. **Contact your physician or county health department, or visit FloridaHealth.gov/findaflushot to find a location offering influenza vaccines near you.**

Sincerely,