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FLORIDA HEALTH IN MARION COUNTY URGES VACCINATION AS FLU SEASON INTENSIFIES

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Ocala, Fla.—With the 2016-2017 flu season in full swing and influenza activity increasing across the state, it is critical that all Floridians get the flu vaccine to protect against infection and help prevent the spread of seasonal flu to others. It is never too late to get your flu shot. While most cases of flu are mild, there are exceptions.

“The flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu,” said Florida Department of Health in Marion County Health Officer Erin Hess. “With Marion County in peak flu season, now is the time to get vaccinated.”

Flu activity is on the rise in Florida, particularly in groups at high risk for severe illness such as children, pregnant women, people with underlying chronic conditions and people over the age of 65. Visits to emergency departments for influenza are also increasing in these high risk groups. The department continues to urge residents to reduce their risk of severe illness from infection by getting vaccinated against influenza. This is especially important for individuals at high-risk for severe illness.

The annual flu vaccine is safe and is the most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older, including pregnant women. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection against the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends people get injectable flu shots. Nasal spray vaccine is not recommended for this flu season because of concerns about its effectiveness.

It is also essential to practice good hygiene by properly and frequently washing your hands to help prevent the spread of seasonal flu. Make it a habit to clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces in your home, school or office. You can take additional steps to ward off the flu by coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and avoiding touching your face.

Immunizations are free for people ages 18 and younger and no appointment is needed at the department’s Ocala office. 1801 SE 32nd Ave. The immunization clinic is open weekdays from 8 a.m.–4:15 p.m. Adults pay \$31 for flu shots, but the cost may be covered by insurance or other programs.

The flu vaccine is offered in many other convenient locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, retail stores, pharmacies, health centers and by many employers and schools. Visit the department’s flu shot locator page to search for a flu vaccine location near you.

For further information regarding influenza surveillance information, messaging and guidance, visit the influenza homepage at www.floridahealth.gov/floridaflu.

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