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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES FLORIDIANS TO HELP PREVENT SEASONAL FLU

Get the vaccine before Halloween and keep the flu from ruining fall festivities



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Ocala, Fla.—Flu season is here and the Florida Department of Health in Marion County urges residents and visitors to take precautions to reduce their risk of infection. Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death.

"The flu vaccine is the single best way to protect yourself against seasonal flu," said Florida Department of Health in Marion County Health Officer Erin Hess. "Get the vaccine before Halloween so you and your family can stop flu in its tracks before the season is in full swing."

Everyone aged six months and older should get the flu vaccine. Vaccination to prevent influenza is particularly important for people who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza, such as pregnant women, children under the age of 5 and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease).

It can take up to two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. In the meantime, you are still at risk for getting the flu. That is why it is important to get vaccinated early in the fall, before the flu season really gets under way.

Symptoms of the flu may include headache, fever, severe cough, runny nose or body aches. Contact your health care provider immediately if symptoms appear.

The Department offers the following prevention tips:

- Get vaccinated every year since flu viruses change.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Jan Stepp, Immunization Clinic supervisor for the Florida Department of Health in Marion County, gives a flu shot to Florida Department of Health in Marion County Health Officer Erin Hess. (Department of Health Photo)

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth since germs are spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your children are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, unless you need medical care.

Check with your physician or visit the *HealthMap Vaccine Finder* at flushot.healthmap.org to see where flu vaccine is available in your area.

For more information, visit the Department's *Flu Prevention* Web page at www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/flu-prevention/.

To learn more about the spread of flu in Florida, visit the Department's *Influenza* Web page at www.floridahealth.gov/floridaflu/.

About the Florida Department of Health

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