

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Get the Flu Shot to Prevent the Spread of Influenza

The flu attributed to 70 deaths in LA County last season.

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is reminding everyone six months of age and older to get an annual flu vaccine. Influenza (the flu) vaccinations will be available at no-cost to residents at Public Health Centers, LA County libraries and more than 100 community vaccination events throughout the county. Flu vaccination is also available at community clinics, pharmacies or through regular healthcare providers.

“Getting an annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu,” said Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer for Los Angeles County. “Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for the body’s immune response to fully respond, we encourage everyone to get vaccinated as soon as possible to reduce their risk for getting the flu.”

The County of Los Angeles Public Library continues to partner with Public Health to provide free flu vaccines at 18 community libraries throughout the county.

“As libraries continue to evolve to serve the needs of our communities, we are excited to host free flu shot clinics in collaboration with Public Health at 18 LA County libraries,” said Susan Baier, Regional Administrator, County of Los Angeles Public Library. “This is the third consecutive year that we have partnered with Public Health to bring health care directly into our local neighborhoods, and we hope to provide free flu shots to more individuals this year than the last two years combined.”

Impact of the Flu

During the 2015-2016 season, there were 70 deaths attributed to the flu in Los Angeles County. Many were among older adults, but people of all ages died from flu-related complications. In the United States, the flu leads to thousands of hospitalizations and deaths each year. There have been as many as 49,000 deaths and about 200,000 hospitalizations from flu in the U.S. in a single year.

While anyone can get sick with the flu and become severely ill, some people are more likely to experience severe illness. Young children, adults aged 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions are among those groups of people who are at high risk of serious flu complications, possibly requiring hospitalization and sometimes resulting in death.

Vaccination Recommendations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone 6 months of age and older be vaccinated against the flu every year. This year's flu vaccine has been updated to better match viruses circulating this flu season. Flu vaccines are important for everyone, especially for people who are at greater risk for complications and those who live with or care for these individuals. These groups are:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5 years of age
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- People whose immune system is weakened and those with certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, or conditions affecting the nervous system
- People who are overweight or obese
- People who work or live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities
- Health care personnel and child care workers

The CDC does not recommend the nasal spray this flu season. Studies found the nasal spray offered little or no protection for children 2 through 17 years of age last season.

Vaccination Resources

Residents are encouraged to contact their regular healthcare provider to schedule an appointment for a flu vaccination. Most insurance plans cover vaccines at no cost to the patient. Many pharmacies also offer flu vaccines and some can bill insurance companies.

Residents without health insurance or a regular source of healthcare can get a free vaccine at a Public Health Center or community vaccination event. No appointments are needed. Visit <http://bit.ly/FluVaccineInfo> for:

- 2016 Public Health flu vaccination outreach schedule
- A list of community clinics offering vaccines at a reduced or no-cost
- Flu educational materials

Residents may also call the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 for referrals to flu vaccination sites.

Influenza vaccination requirements for healthcare and childcare personnel can be found here: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Flu.htm>

About Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about the Department of Public Health and the work we do, please visit PublicHealth.LACounty.gov.

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