



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **Flu Season Has Arrived, Get Your Flu Shot Today**

Flu shots are readily available throughout LA County

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is encouraging all residents 6 months of age and older to get their flu vaccination this season. While flu activity is currently low in LA County, it is intensifying in many areas of the country, and this is the earliest significant flu activity we have seen for several years. Given holiday travel and family gatherings, protect yourself by getting vaccinated today. The flu vaccine takes about two weeks to become effective, but will provide protection throughout the flu season.

“In LA County, we are seeing the start of flu season that can stretch until May of next year. Now is an excellent time to get your annual flu vaccine. The earlier you get your seasonal flu vaccine, the sooner you will be protected from the flu,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “We cannot predict how severe or how mild a flu season will be. Flu is a serious illness and should be treated as such. Ample vaccine is already available in LA County in a variety of locations, including pharmacies, supermarkets, community clinics and doctors’ offices.”

Influenza accounts for up to 200,000 hospitalizations, and an average of 23,607 deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the CDC. Symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, headache, and muscle ache within the first three to five days of illness.

“The flu can affect each person differently. Most individuals who get sick are able to treat themselves at home with over-the-counter medications, drinking plenty of fluids, resting and staying home from work or school. Others may develop complications such as pneumonia and may require hospitalization,” said Dr. Fielding. “Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. We urge everyone, six months of age and older, to be vaccinated against the flu, and to practice basic hygiene, such as washing your hands, to prevent the spread of the flu and other contagious diseases.”

Because immunity from flu vaccination declines over time and the strain of flu virus that circulates changes from year to year, it is recommended that everyone, six months of age and older, receive a flu vaccine every year. Residents are encouraged to contact their regular doctor for recommended vaccinations. Alternatively, supermarkets and pharmacies throughout the county are also offering seasonal flu vaccine for a low fee. Visit [www.ph.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/index.htm](http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/index.htm) to find a source for low-cost flu vaccination.

For individuals without health insurance or another source of health care, free flu vaccine clinics operated by LA County Department of Public Health are available throughout the county. Visit the Public Health website at <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, or call the LA County



Information Line at 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone in the county to find a free flu vaccine clinic.

While influenza vaccine is now recommended for everyone (except infants under six months of age), it is especially important that certain groups be vaccinated because they are either at greater risk of developing complications from the flu or because they live with or care for others who are at greater risk of developing complications. These groups are:

- Pregnant women;
- Children younger than five;
- Adults 65 years of age and older;
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes;
- People who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities;
- People who live with or care for those at high-risk for complications from the flu, including health care and day care workers.

Flu is extremely contagious. Everyone is urged to practice basic hygiene to help reduce the chances of catching either the flu or other illnesses. These healthy habits include:

- Washing your hands frequently, especially after using the restroom and before and after eating;
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze;
- Not touching your nose, mouth or eyes to prevent the spread of germs;
- Staying home from work or school when sick.

The 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 \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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