



For Immediate Release:

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It's Time for Your Flu Shot LA County County Flu Clinics Have Begun

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles County health officials announce that flu vaccines, including FluMist nasal spray, will be available at community health centers and community outreach clinics starting now through early December for groups at high risk for serious complications related to the flu. County community health centers are able to dispense free flu vaccine to qualifying patients without a regular health care provider or whose healthcare provider does not offer flu vaccine, regardless of income level. Qualified patients include those 50 years of age and older, children from six months to five years of age, women who will be pregnant during the flu season, or those with a medical condition that puts them at risk for flu complications (e.g. chronic heart or lung conditions, diabetes, or HIV/AIDS). There is no shortage of flu vaccine this season.

“Influenza, more commonly known as the flu, causes approximately 36,000 deaths from complications related to the flu and more than 200,000 hospitalizations nationally each year,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Flu is also the leading cause of pneumonia. Getting vaccinated is the most effective way to prevent flu and its complications, and I strongly urge everyone who is able and eligible to get a flu shot or FluMist vaccine. Public Health will be hosting a number of clinics at our health centers and throughout the County in the next couple of months as we attempt to vaccinate as many people as possible in preparation for the upcoming flu season. People can call the County information line at 211 or they can visit us online at www.lapublichealth.org to find clinic locations and hours.”

Influenza is a serious and highly contagious illness that is rapidly spread from person to person through uncovered coughs and sneezes. The virus may also be spread by touching an object with the virus on it and then touching ones mouth, nose or eyes. People with flu can start spreading the virus to others one day before symptoms appear and up to five days after showing signs of illness.

Symptoms of flu include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat

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- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than in adults)

Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

The best way to prevent the spread of flu is to wash your hands often, especially after visiting the restroom, or coming into contact with someone who has flu-like symptoms, cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes, stay home if you are sick or keep your children out of school if they are sick, and get vaccinated against the flu.

Myths regarding flu vaccine (these statements are all false):

- “If you are generally healthy, you don't need the flu vaccine.”
- “The flu vaccine will make you sick with the flu.”
- “Flu season ends in December.” (fact: flu season goes all the way through March)

Those who should not receive a flu shot without first consulting a doctor include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.
- Children less than 6 months of age.
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

Those who should not receive FluMist nasal spray vaccine without first consulting a doctor include:

- Children under 24 months of age (the nasal spray vaccine is not approved for children younger than 24 months of age).
- Adults older than 50 years of age.
- Pregnant women.
- People with severe asthma or active wheezing, chronic health conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, or weakened immune systems caused by HIV/AIDS, cancer or other conditions.
- People with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS).

Some people could experience a few short-term side effects after getting a flu shot. These include soreness, redness or swelling at the vaccine site, low fever and aches. Symptoms should



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clear up within two days, but if they do not people should talk to a doctor. Side effects associated with the FluMist vaccine include runny nose or nasal congestion, sore throat in adults, and a fever higher than 100° in children two to six years of age.

For information regarding the hours and locations of flu vaccination clinics, please go to www.lapublichealth.org or call the LA County Info Line at 211.

For those whose usual health care providers do not have vaccine, other sources are available. Many pharmacies are administering flu vaccine. These and other places can be found by logging onto www.findaflushot.com.

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 more than 4,000 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.lapublichealth.org>.

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