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## **INFLUENZA (FLU) UPDATE: DECEMBER 2010**

### **NATIONAL INFLUENZA VACCINATION WEEK**

The week of December 5<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> is National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW). This national observance, instituted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), seeks to highlight the importance of **flu vaccination**, which is **the single best way to protect against the flu**. This year's key message, "The Flu Ends With U," emphasizes that getting vaccinated not only protects you from the flu, but it can prevent you from spreading the flu to friends and family as well. NIVW provides an ideal opportunity to update the community on the progress of this year's flu season and to **encourage everyone, age 6 months and older, to receive this year's flu vaccine**.

To date, overall flu activity across the nation remains low, but we are seeing a steady increase in the number of people reporting flu-like illness as well as the number of people testing positive for flu, particularly in the southeastern states. In Albany County, the number of documented flu cases is currently low. We anticipate seeing a continued steady increase in flu activity, both locally and nationally. Peak flu activity typically occurs sometime in January or February, although this can vary from season to season.

Unlike last year's flu season, when the 2009 H1N1 flu virus was the primary flu virus circulating, this year three different flu viruses are circulating and causing illness. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine protects against all three circulating flu viruses. To be adequately protected against all flu viruses this flu season it is important to get this year's flu vaccine.

For those who have not yet received the 2010-2011 flu vaccine, **now is an appropriate time to get vaccinated**, before flu activity increases and the risk of getting sick also increases. During this time of year many people are traveling, getting together with family and friends for the holidays and gathering in crowded public settings such as shopping malls – events which create opportunities to spread illness and for more people to get sick with the flu. It takes about two weeks after receiving the flu vaccine for the body to develop immunity to protect against infection so the sooner one gets vaccinated the better.

### **Types of flu vaccine available:**

The flu vaccine is available as either an injection (flu shot) or as a nasal spray.

- The flu shot – The flu shot is approved for use in anyone 6 months or older, including healthy people, people with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women. The main side effect is soreness at the site of the injection.
- The nasal-spray vaccine – The nasal spray is approved for use only in healthy people (with no underlying medical conditions, including asthma), ages 2-49 years, who are not pregnant. The nasal vaccine is a good alternative for people who fit this category and who prefer not to get a shot. The main side effect is nasal congestion or a runny nose.

## **Where to get vaccinated against the flu?**

- Call your doctor's office. Most primary care providers offer the flu vaccine to their patients.
- Check with your local pharmacy. Many offer the flu vaccine for a moderate fee. To locate places near you that are offering the flu vaccine you can go to:  
<http://www.google.org/flushot>
- The Albany County Department of Health, located at 175 Green Street in Albany, offers the flu vaccine during specific clinics, by appointment only. Please note we accept most insurances plans. To schedule an appointment and to check on any applicable fees call the Flu Line at 447-4505, between 8:30 am and 4 pm Monday through Friday.

## **For more information about seasonal flu or about the flu vaccine please visit:**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>
- <http://www.albanycounty.com/health/flu.asp>
- <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/>
- <http://www.preventinfluenza.org/>
- <http://www.immunize.org/vis/2flu.pdf> (for information on the flu shot)
- <http://www.immunize.org/vis/liveflu.pdf> (for information on the nasal spray)