



Department of
Developmental Disabilities

Office of MUI/Registry Unit

John R. Kasich, Governor
John L. Martin, Director

Health & Safety Alert # 31-09-12
Preventing the Flu
Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Time is Here!!

The purpose of this Alert is to encourage all individuals and caregivers to be vaccinated for the flu. The single best way to protect against the Flu is to get vaccinated each fall. Note: The flu season can start as soon as early October, so vaccinations should occur as soon as possible.

The seasonal influenza vaccine is formulated to protect against the three strains of flu that public health researchers believe will be the most common during the upcoming season. That calculation is based on flu trends observed in the previous year and usually includes two influenza A subtypes and one influenza B subtype.

On February 23, 2012 the World Health Organization recommended that the Northern Hemisphere's 2012-2013 seasonal influenza vaccine be made from the following three vaccine viruses:

- *an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;*
- *an A/Victoria/361/2011 (H3N2)-like virus;*
- *a B/Wisconsin/1/2010-like virus (from the B/Yamagata lineage of viruses).*

While the H1N1 virus used to make the 2012-2013 flu vaccine is the same virus that was included in the 2011-2012 vaccine, the recommended influenza H3N2 and B vaccine viruses are different from those in the 2011-2012 influenza vaccine for the Northern Hemisphere.

In the U.S. influenza causes an annual average of 36,000 deaths ranking 7th among all causes of death. In addition, the flu results in high numbers of hospitalizations and work loss days.

The list below includes the groups of people more likely to get flu-related complications if they get sick from influenza.

People at High Risk for Developing Flu-Related Complications:

- People 65 years and older;

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- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house those with long-term illnesses;
- All children 6 to 23 months of age;
- People with any condition that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions (that is, a condition that makes it hard to breathe or swallow, such as brain injury or disease, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other nerve or muscle disorders.)
- People who live with or care for others who are high risk for complications. This includes:
 - Household contacts and caregivers of people with certain medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, and chronic lung disease.
- Pregnant women
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives

If you get the flu, antiviral drugs are a treatment option. Check with your doctor promptly if you have a high risk condition and you get flu symptoms. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Your doctor may prescribe drugs to treat your flu illness.

People who have medical conditions including:

- Asthma
- Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability (mental retardation), moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury].
- Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
- Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
- Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
- Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes mellitus)
- Kidney disorders
- Liver disorders
- Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
- Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with

- HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)
- People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- People who are morbidly obese (Body Mass Index, or BMI, of 40 or greater)

Who Should not be Vaccinated?

There are some people who should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. These 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.
- Influenza vaccine is not approved for use in 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.
- Adults and children 6 months and older with chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma

Vaccine Side Effects

The flu shot: The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Almost all people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. However, on rare occasions, flu vaccination can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

Good Health Habits

Good health habits are also an important way to help prevent the flu.

- **Avoid close contact.**
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.**

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

- **Clean your hands.**

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.**

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

If you do not have a personal physician, local Departments of Health often offers flu shots at a reasonable cost. When obtaining your annual flu vaccine, ask your physician if you qualify for the pneumonia vaccine also.

For questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

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