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N E W S

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Office of Public Affairs • (614) 644-8562
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ODH SUPPLIES INFLUENZA VACCINE TO LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) will provide 240,000 doses of influenza vaccine to Ohio’s local health departments (LHDs) and shipments began today. ODH-supplied vaccine is intended only for those at the highest risk for influenza-related complications including adults 65 and older, children 6 to 23 months, those with chronic illnesses such as asthma and women who will be pregnant during the flu season.

Others should see their physician to determine whether they are good candidates for influenza vaccine.

“Vaccination is the best protection against flu and flu-related complications such as pneumonia,” said ODH Director J. Nick Baird, M.D. “So please consider getting a flu shot this year.”

Pneumonia is the most common complication associated with flu and causes more than 3,000 deaths annually in Ohio, placing flu and pneumonia among the top 10 causes of death in the state. Nationwide, influenza and its complications cause some 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations annually, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ohioans can help stop the spread of illness by washing hands thoroughly and often; covering mouths when sneezing or coughing; and staying home from work or school if sick.

In addition to the 240,000 influenza vaccines for LHDs, ODH will provide 100,000 doses for the federal Vaccines for Children program which covers children on Medicaid, those with no insurance, those who are underinsured, Native Americans and Alaska natives. In a typical flu season, public health provides 10 percent to 15 percent of all influenza vaccine available.

It generally takes at least two weeks after a vaccination for individuals to develop protection from influenza. October to January is the best time to be vaccinated but vaccine can provide protection when given as late as March. Flu season in Ohio typically runs from November to mid-March.

The flu vaccine contains inactivated (killed) viruses; it produces protection but cannot cause the flu. The 2005-06 vaccine formulation contains three strains: A/New Caledonia (H1N1)-like; A/California (H3N2)-like; and B/Shanghai-like antigens.

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