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N E W S

For Immediate Release
Oct. 4, 2004

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ODH SUPPLIES INFLUENZA VACCINE TO LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) last week began shipping 270,000 doses of influenza vaccine to Ohio’s local health departments. This ODH-supplied vaccine is to be given only to high-risk people, including adults 65 and older, children 6 to 23 months and those with chronic illnesses such as diabetes.

Non-high-risk people should see their physician to determine whether they are good candidates for influenza vaccine.

“The risk of flu and flu-related complications can be lessened significantly with vaccine,” said ODH Director J. Nick Baird, M.D. “Let’s all consider getting a shot in the arm for better health this fall.”

Pneumonia is the most common complication from 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.

ODH ordered 270,000 doses of influenza vaccine for the 2004-05 flu season, in addition to 100,000 doses for the federal Vaccines for Children program. The ODH-supplied vaccine is not intended for the general, non-high-risk population.

Federal recommendations, which ODH supports, call for all people older than 50, children 6 to 23 months, those with chronic conditions, household contacts of high-risk individuals and health care workers to consider vaccination.

The flu season in Ohio typically runs from November through mid-March and the recommended time period for vaccination is mid-October through January. It generally takes at least two weeks after a vaccination for individuals to develop protection from influenza.

“Influenza can be deadly and it can also be prevented,” Baird said. “A simple vaccine truly can save a life.”

The flu vaccine contains inactivated (killed) viruses; it produces protection but cannot cause the flu. This year’s vaccine contains three strains: A/Fujian (H3N2)-like, A/New Caledonia (H1N1)-like and B/Shanghai-like antigens.

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