

HEALTH SPOT

Office of Developmental Programs

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FLU SEASON 2011

In the 2010-2011 flu season, about 43.4% of Pennsylvanians were vaccinated against flu. In Pennsylvania slightly more children and slightly fewer adults were vaccinated when compared to the US population in general. As of the first week in October 2011, the reported cases of flu were still low, but flu season can peak anytime between October and May.

Why is flu important to pay attention to?

For most people flu is a mild, self-limiting disease that is annoying while they have it, but leaves without any problems. However for some people getting flu can mean an admission to the hospital or even death. People most at risk for the complications of flu are people younger than 5 years old, older than 65 years of age, pregnant, and/or people with a chronic health condition like asthma or heart disease. Other chronic disease risks include seizures, cerebral palsy, heart disease, diabetes, kidney and liver disease.

How can you prepare for flu season this year?

“Take 3”

Preparation for the flu season is easy. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) call the ways that you can prevent the spread of disease “Take 3”. They include:

1. Get a flu shot
2. Stop the spread of flu by washing your hands, coughing or sneezing into your elbow, avoiding touching your face, and staying away from people if you or they are sick.
3. Take antiviral medication to treat flu if your doctor tells you to.

I'm healthy why should I get a flu shot?

Research shows that healthy people often pass flu to other people especially those that are at higher risk for complications from the flu. Often school children pass flu to parents and grandparents. In addition the elderly and people with chronic conditions may not respond as well to the flu shot making them more at risk for having the flu passed to them.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

The flu viruses vary from year to year and sometimes the vaccine doesn't match the viruses as closely as it might. However, the flu shot still protects against disease even though the vaccine isn't a close match for the viruses.

Where can I get more information about flu?

The CDC has a wealth of information about flu and preventing flu. Their website, listed below, contains posters and fact sheets that you can use to spread the word about preventing flu. For information about where to get a flu shot you can contact your PCP or your local Department of Health regional office. Many pharmacies give flu shots for a small cost usually between \$20 and \$30, but find out first if your health insurance will cover it.

REMEMBER, "TAKE 3" AND PREVENT FLU

Resources

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>