



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Karen E. Timberlake, Secretary

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Immunize Now For Protection Against Seasonal Influenza

State health officials are encouraging individuals to get immunized against seasonal influenza now, before the coming winter season. There is plenty of seasonal influenza vaccine on hand, and health care providers and local health departments should be able to immunize all who wish to be vaccinated.

“While many people are closely watching the H1N1 influenza threat and are waiting for that vaccine, we must not overlook the importance of being immunized against seasonal influenza as well,” says Department Secretary Karen Timberlake. “A vaccine for H1N1 influenza probably won’t be available until late October, but the seasonal influenza vaccine is available now. It would be prudent for people to get immunized for seasonal influenza while we await developments on H1N1.”

Annual influenza immunization is needed for protection. Influenza viruses can change each year; therefore, influenza vaccines are developed for each season. Seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for:

- persons 50 years old or older
- women who are or will be in their second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season
- children and adolescents who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- healthy children 6 months through 5 years of age
- persons 6 months of age or older with heart or lung problems requiring regular medical follow-up or recent hospitalization, cancer or immunologic disorders, AIDS and related conditions, kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, anemia, and asthma

Persons who need influenza vaccine should contact their health care provider or their local health department. Local businesses and organizations may also offer influenza vaccination clinics, and these may be advertised in local media.

Each year, millions of people in the United States become ill with seasonal influenza. Some 200,000 people are admitted to hospitals across the country and about 36,000 people die each year as a result of seasonal influenza.

Influenza activity in Wisconsin usually begins in November and peaks around late January or early February. The past several influenza seasons in Wisconsin were relatively mild, but the severity of influenza outbreaks cannot be predicted. Even relatively mild influenza seasons are associated with thousands of hospitalizations and deaths.

Hospitalization rates are highest among children under age 1 and persons 65 and older. Although most people with influenza recover completely within two weeks, some people, especially the very young, the elderly, and those with chronic diseases or impaired immune systems, can develop life-threatening complications.

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Seasonal influenza is different from a cold, mainly because the symptoms and complications are more severe. Seasonal influenza viruses infect the respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs) in humans. The onset of the disease usually occurs suddenly and symptoms typically include fever, headache, malaise (a feeling of being ill and without energy), cough, sore throat, nasal congestion and body aches.

For more information, visit:

- Wisconsin Department of Health Services Immunization Program: <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/immunization>
- Influenza Fact Sheet: <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/factsheets/Influenza.htm>
- Local Public Health Department Listing: http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/dph_ops/localhealth

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