



Influenza vaccination information

This is the season when many parents consider Influenza vaccinations for their children. The Minnesota Department of Health has expanded recommendations for annual Influenza vaccination to all children and teens, ages 6 months through 18 years. The Minnesota Department of Health also recommends vaccinations for people age 50 and older, women who will be pregnant during flu season, residents of long-term care facilities, health care personnel, and people who care for children younger than 5 years of age.

Parents are encouraged to discuss the option of Influenza vaccinations with their healthcare provider. Parents who would like more information about vaccinations should visit the Minnesota Department of Health website at www.mdhflu.com. The Minnesota Department of Health recommends vaccinations in October or November. Influenza can occur any time between November through May, but peaks most often in January or February. You can get the vaccine as soon as it is available, and for as long as illness is occurring in your community.

Don't forget to keep healthy by practicing good health habits. Wash hands frequently with soap and water, cover a cough or sneeze into your sleeve, eat nutritious foods and get enough sleep.

BACKGROUND

Influenza (also known as Flu) is a very common upper respiratory illness. It is caused by the influenza virus, which can be spread by coughing, sneezing or nasal secretions.

Symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea commonly called "the stomach flu" are not Influenza. Influenza (Flu) symptoms start quickly with fever, body aches, headache, cough, runny nose, sore throat and chills. Other illnesses can have similar symptoms, but if it is not caused by Influenza virus, it is not really Influenza.

The Minnesota Department of Health encourages people of all ages with weakened immune systems or any chronic health conditions, and their household contacts and caregivers to consider vaccination against Influenza. This is especially important for individuals who have an underlying health condition that might affect lung function or the person's ability to handle increased respiratory secretions. Those conditions include: asthma, cognitive disabilities, spinal cord injuries and seizure disorders.

Healthy people usually recover from the Flu in several days, but some populations are at greater risk of developing serious complications from Influenza virus, such as pneumonia or bronchitis. Influenza can be life-threatening for some people.

There are two types of vaccination against Influenza. The traditional "flu shot" is an inactivated (killed) virus that is injected into the muscle. The nasal spray vaccine is a live, weakened form of the virus, and cannot be taken by everyone. Your health care provider will help you determine which vaccine is best for you and your family members.

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