

Delaware Flu Season Starts; Governor Carney Gets His Flu Shot at DPH Clinic



Delaware Governor John Carney rolls up his sleeve for a flu shot from DHSS Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker.

DOVER – Today, Governor John Carney rolled up his sleeve to get his annual flu shot at the Division of Public Health’s (DPH) drive-thru flu clinic in Dover, officially launching the state’s flu season prevention efforts. DPH urges all Delawareans 6 months and older to get a flu shot for protection from influenza illnesses and complications.

“Getting your annual vaccination is an important step to prevent illness, protect our workforce, reduce health care costs and ultimately, save lives,” Governor Carney said. “I encourage every Delawarean to get their flu shot early in the flu season.”

Vaccinations not only prevent people from getting the flu, but they can reduce the severity of flu illness and prevent visits to the doctor, clinic, emergency room and hospitalizations. Vaccinated people have less chance of missing family, school and work events due to influenza illness.

“Vaccination is not just about protecting yourself, it’s also about protecting each other,” said Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker. “Everyone comes into contact with all types of individuals who are vulnerable to influenza viruses carried by unvaccinated

people. Getting a flu shot might not only help you but your grandma, a co-worker or your young son or daughter.”

The 12-hour event was held from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Department of Transportation’s (DelDOT) main administration campus in Dover, in hopes of taking advantage of the busy location, which also houses the Division of Motor Vehicles. DPH and Bayhealth nurses administered intramuscular flu vaccines to drivers, their passengers and pedestrians. A special area was available for those with access or interpretation needs. American Sign Language interpreters along with interpreters for those speaking Spanish or Haitian Creole were on site.

By noon, 431 vaccinations had already been provided, surpassing last year’s total of approximately 346 vaccinations.

“Today it’s easier than ever to get your flu shot. We wanted to make it as convenient as possible so we are bringing our flu clinic to your car,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “The flu is easy to transmit and you can get it from seemingly healthy, but unvaccinated people. It is also unpredictable, which is why it’s important to get vaccinated every year, since we never know what kind of flu season we will see.”

Added DelDOT Deputy Cabinet Secretary Nicole Majeski, “We are pleased to partner with DPH in this important public safety effort. Our campus gets a lot of traffic with the DMV on site, and we hoped that by offering to host it here, we could help increase the number of Delawareans who will get the flu vaccine. We also shared it with our employees here on campus and many of them have been able to receive flu shots just by walking up.”

DPH urges individuals to get their flu shots early in the flu season. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against

influenza virus infection. The flu mist is not being recommended again this year based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's analysis, which raises concerns about its effectiveness.



Michael Whitt of Dover
getting his flu shot from
Bayhealth Pharmacist Evelyn
Eckenrode, RPH

Getting a flu vaccination is easy. They are offered through physician offices, many pharmacies and some grocery stores. DPH is also offering flu vaccines at its Public Health clinics in several State Service Centers including some with evening hours. For more information about the flu and where to get vaccinated, visit www.flu.delaware.gov, call 1-800-282-8672, or Google "CDC flu finder" and enter a ZIP code.

Last flu season, Delaware had 4,590 confirmed flu cases, 15 of which were fatal. All but one of the individuals who died was over the age of 50 and had underlying health conditions.

Delawareans can prevent the spread of the flu and other respiratory illness with good hygiene: Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers, and cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and dispose of tissues immediately. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow. Droplets from a sneeze can travel up to six feet. Stay six feet away from others who are coughing or sneezing, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

Flu symptoms come on suddenly, and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and body aches, chills, and fatigue. Some people get complications including pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections. Those sick with the flu should stay home from work, school, and other gatherings and not return until free of fever – 100° F

(37.8° C), without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

They should avoid close contact with well people in the household, drink plenty of water and other clear liquids, and treat fever and cough with over-the-counter medicines. Those who are very sick, pregnant, or have a medical condition like asthma should call their doctors for antiviral medicines to make the illness milder, hasten recovery, and prevent serious complications, hospitalizations, and even death.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.