

DPH Kicks Off 2019-2020 Flu Season with Free Vaccination Clinics

DOVER – The 2019-2020 flu season has officially arrived, and to kick off the state's influenza prevention efforts, the Division of Public Health (DPH) will hold two free flu vaccination clinics for the public.

On Friday, Oct. 4, 2019, DPH will hold a free flu clinic at the Porter State Service Center, 511 W. 8th St., Wilmington, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The first 200 people to get their flu vaccines will receive a free gift card.

On Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2019, DPH will hold a free drive-thru flu clinic at the DelDOT Administration Building, 800 S. Bay Road, Dover, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or until vaccines run out. Eagle 97.7 and Cool 101.3 will hold live broadcasts. Both clinics will be held rain or shine. The flu clinics are open to individuals nine years of age and older.

"Now is the time to get your annual flu shot," said Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker, a practicing family physician. "Vaccinations not only prevent people from getting the flu, but they also 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."

The flu vaccine is recommended for Delawareans 6 months of age and older. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, it is important to get vaccinated as early as possible to give your body time to build immunity. Getting the flu vaccine now will also provide protection

during the entire flu season. During the 2018-2019 flu season, Delaware recorded 6,387 laboratory-confirmed flu cases. More than 1,000 Delawareans were hospitalized due to the flu and 24 people died from flu complications.

“The flu is unpredictable,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Getting your annual flu vaccine is the best, most effective thing you can do to keep from getting the flu, and from spreading it to family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. The flu is highly contagious and can even be deadly so we urge you to get your flu shot early in the flu season.”

The flu is easy to transmit and you can get it even from seemingly healthy, but unvaccinated, children and adults. Children, older adults, and those who have chronic underlying medical conditions are most at-risk for complications from the flu and are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated now.

DPH also will offer other flu clinics throughout the season. A schedule can be found at <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html>. In addition, flu vaccines are offered through physician offices, many pharmacies and some grocery stores. To locate where flu vaccines near you are being offered, Google “CDC flu finder” and enter a ZIP code.

In addition to getting an annual flu shot, 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, 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. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Keep your distance from people who are coughing or sneezing.

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 they have been free of fever – with temperature less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C), without the use of fever-reducing medications – for at least 24 hours.

People with flu symptoms should avoid close contact with well people in the household and stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other clear liquids. Over-the-counter medicines can provide symptom relief, but if you suspect you have influenza, call your doctor as they may decide to provide antiviral medications to help hasten recovery and prevent serious complications. This is particularly important for those who feel very sick, are pregnant or have chronic medical conditions.

For more information about the flu and where to get vaccinated, visit flu.delaware.gov or call 1-800-282-8672.

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>.

The Delaware Department of 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.