

DPH Partners With Health Care and Community Partners to Launch Fight Flu DE – Enhanced Flu Vaccination Campaign

DOVER (Sept. 29, 2020) – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is partnering with health care, faith-based and community partners to launch an aggressive communications campaign to mobilize all Delawareans to get their flu vaccinations called ‘Fight Flu DE.’ Working to reach diverse audiences through influencers and with messaging that will motivate them to get the flu vaccine, the campaign integrates grassroots outreach with mass-media marketing strategies to make sure people know where they can get a flu vaccine regardless of insurance coverage.

While DPH has always been proactive in encouraging flu vaccinations, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a greater urgency for Delawareans to get vaccinated against influenza.

“This year it is more important than ever to get your flu vaccine, as we are dealing with uncertainties around how flu season will look this year with COVID-19 circulating at the same time,” said Governor John Carney. “While the flu vaccine will not prevent you from getting COVID, it has many important benefits. It will reduce your chance of getting the flu and flu-related complications, while saving critical health care resources to treat COVID patients.”

Delawareans are urged to think about the Big 4 locations where they can get their flu vaccines this year:

- Medical provider offices or community health clinics

- Pharmacies
- Community Flu Clinics
- DPH Clinics for uninsured and underinsured individuals

This week, DPH will hold three community flu clinics, two on **Friday, Oct. 2** – one at the **Gigante grocery store on Front Street (Route 14) in Milford from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.** and one at the New Castle Farmer’s Market on Route 13 in New Castle from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. DPH will hold a second clinic at the New Castle Farmer’s Market location on **Saturday, Oct. 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**, while Westside Family Healthcare will hold a free community flu clinic at its **Bear facility in the Fox Run Shopping Center from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 3.** Beebe Healthcare is holding the following community flu clinics:

- September 29, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Milton CHEER Center, 24855 Broadkill Road, Milton
- October 1, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Rehoboth Convention Center, 229 Rehoboth Ave., Rehoboth (walk-up and bike only)
- October 2, 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Crossroads Church, 20684 State Forest Road, Georgetown (drive-through only)
- October 3, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Beebe South Coastal, 32750 Roxana Road, Frankford (drive-through only)

A list of community and DPH flu clinic sites can be found on flu.delaware.gov. In addition, the locations for flu vaccines can be found if you Google “CDC flu finder” and enter a ZIP code.

The flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death by about half.

“Getting a flu vaccine is one of the most important things that every Delawarean, 6 months and older, can do to protect themselves from flu illness,” said Molly Magarik, Secretary for the Department of Health and Social Services. “It is critically important that persons over age 65 and those with

underlying medical conditions of any kind get the vaccine as soon as possible.” Pregnant women, children under age 2 and African Americans and Hispanics who are more often impacted by chronic diseases such as lung and heart disease, obesity, and asthma are also at greater risk of flu illness.

“It’s important to get a flu vaccine especially in the African American and other minority communities because of our higher risk of illness,” said Henrietta Johnson Medical Center CMO, Dr. Yvette Gbemudu. “The flu virus and other viruses can affect us more strongly without proper protection. Even if you are infected with the flu after getting a flu vaccine, studies show that your response to it will be lessened because you got the flu shot. It reduces your risk of dying from the flu, which is possible because the virus is deadly.”

It takes about two weeks after receiving the flu vaccine for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, so 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.

“It will also be vitally important that Delawareans step up their efforts around wearing face coverings, social distancing, and washing or sanitizing their hands frequently, not only to protect against COVID-19, but also against flu in the coming months,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “It’s too early to know what impact these preventive measures may already be having in reducing the early spread of flu in our state, but it’s possible they may be the key to a milder flu season this year – but only if we stay vigilant in our efforts.”

In addition to these basic prevention measures, 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.

Some signs and symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar including fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and body aches, chills and fatigue. **Both COVID-19 and flu** can have varying degrees of signs and symptoms, ranging from no symptoms to severe symptoms. Testing can help you determine which you have.

COVID-19 symptoms that are different from flu may include change in or loss of taste or smell. Also, flu symptoms generally come on more suddenly than COVID symptoms.

The following organizations have proudly partnered with DPH in the effort to significantly increase flu vaccinations this fall and into the winter: The Delaware Healthcare Association and its member hospital systems: Bayhealth, Beebe Healthcare, ChristianaCare, TidalHealth Nanticoke, Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children, St. Francis Healthcare and the Veterans Administration Medical Center; the Medical Society of Delaware; and the Federally Qualified Health Centers: Westside Family Healthcare, Henrietta Johnson Medical Center, and La Red Health Center.

“The annual influx of flu patients taxes hospital capacity. That’s a big problem during the pandemic,” said Wayne A. Smith, President & CEO of the Delaware Healthcare Association. “The best way to preserve hospital space is for everyone to get a flu shot.”

“While scientists are racing to develop a vaccine for COVID-19, the flu vaccine is readily available and can make all the difference in the fight against the flu, which kills tens of thousands of people each year. Now is the time to connect with your physician and get vaccinated,” said Joseph J. Straight, MD, President, Medical Society of Delaware.

“La Red Health Center (LRHC) is pleased to partner with the

Delaware Division of Public Health in providing the flu vaccine at each of its Family Practice Sites located in Georgetown, Milford and Seaford,” said Marketing and Communications Director Kevin Loftus. “This flu season it is especially important to get the flu shot as soon as possible and LRHC encourages its patients and all residents of Sussex County to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity.”

During the 2019-2020 flu season, Delaware recorded 7,075 laboratory-confirmed flu cases. More than 362 Delawareans were hospitalized due to the flu and 11 people died from flu complications.

“Easy access to free or low-cost flu vaccines is critical to keeping our communities healthy, and ultimately, reducing the risk of severe flu symptoms that cause hospitalization,” said Tom Stephens, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Westside Family Healthcare. “During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to get a flu vaccine as severe complications from both illnesses can be life-threatening.”

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.

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

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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.