



MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

December 6, 2007

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Give the gift of good health – get a flu shot

Holiday gatherings can hasten the spread of influenza and Multnomah County Health Department reminds the public that it's not too late to get vaccinated. Flu vaccine is still widely available.

“Getting a flu shot not only protects you, but can help protect your loved ones. Influenza immunizations can take a few weeks to be fully effective, so now is the perfect time to include flu prevention on your holiday to-do list,” says Ginny Schmitz, Multnomah County Health Department’s Immunization Coordinator.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the 2007-2008 influenza season is just beginning and nationwide, influenza activity is currently very low. Flu season can begin as early as October and last through May. More than 103 million doses of influenza vaccine have been distributed as of November 2. According to the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division, nearly 450 Oregonians die of influenza every year, while nationally flu kills more than 36,000 people annually.

“It is especially important to get vaccinated if you are at greater risk of developing serious flu-related complications, such as pneumonia,” says Health Department Director Lillian Shirley. Groups at higher risk include children aged 6 months to 5 years, pregnant women, people 50 years of age and older, people with chronic medical conditions, and anyone living in a nursing home or long-term care facility.

Health officials also encourage caregivers, family members, and those who work with higher risk groups to be immunized. Immunizations are also recommended for school age children (2 to 17 years of age) who are twice as likely to get influenza as adults.

Good health manners can be very effective in preventing transmission of disease, including the flu. “We encourage everyone to cover your cough and wash your hands often. If you are sick, please stay home and please avoid exposure to people who are ill,” states Shirley.

For information on flu vaccination clinic locations call 1-800-SAFENET or search the Web at www.flucliniclocator.org

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