HOOSIERS ENCOURAGED TO GET FLU SHOTS

INDIANAPOLIS – State health officials remind Hoosiers that influenza vaccinations will be available throughout the winter months.   Flu season typically runs from October through March, and vaccinations can be given at any point during this time.

"The best way to prevent getting influenza is by getting the vaccine, either by receiving a shot or by nasal spray," says State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe, M.D

Influenza vaccinations are available in two forms: injection and nasal spray.   The injection, commonly called the 'flu shot,' is available for those over the age of 6 months, and the nasal spray is available for those between the ages of 2 and 49 years old.   Children aged 6 months to 8 years who are receiving influenza vaccination for the first time need to receive a second vaccine at least 4 weeks after the first one.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an average of 5 to 20 percent of the population will get influenza, with more than 200,000 people in the nation hospitalized from complications and nearly 36,000 deaths each year.

"It is especially important for those at high risk for complications from the flu to receive the vaccine, including children aged 6 to 59 months, pregnant women, people age 50 and older, nursing home and long-term care facility residents, and people with certain chronic medical conditions," says Dr. Monroe.

Dr. Monroe also encourages health care workers, household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children from birth to 59 months of age, and household contacts of people at high risk for flu complications to get vaccinated. She says individuals aged 65 and over should also get a one-time pneumonia shot. Individuals with certain high-risk conditions should talk to their health care provider to see if a pneumonia shot is recommended at an earlier age.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Good respiratory hygiene is important to prevent the spread of ALL respiratory infections, including influenza.

State health officials offer the following tips for preventing the spread of influenza and other respiratory illnesses:
- Instead of your hands, use your elbow or upper arm or a tissue to cover your mouth and nose or when you cough or sneeze. Immediately throw used tissues into the wastebasket.
- Wash hands with soap and water after coughing or sneezing or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner if water is not available. Wash hands thoroughly before touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from work, school, and social gatherings when you are sick. This will help prevent others from catching your illness and gives your body the rest it needs to recover.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Many diseases often spread this way.

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five days after becoming sick.

For more information about influenza, visit www.statehealth.IN.gov or contact your primary health care provider.