

DPHHS HAN

From: DPHHS HAN**Sent:** Thursday, August 13, 2009 1:20 PM**Subject:** DPHHS HAN UPDATE 2009-28: DPHHS Press Release 8-12 "It's Not Too Early to Get Seasonal Influenza Vaccine, State Officials Say"**State of Montana**
DPHHS HAN UPDATE**Thursday, August 13, 2009****Forwarding Instructions:****This information is being sent out to you as an FYI with a recommendation for you to consider distribution of this information to your local media contacts.****DPHHS Recommendations:****It's Not Too Early to Get Seasonal Influenza Vaccine, State Officials Say**

The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is urging Montanans to get vaccinated with seasonal influenza vaccine.

While the focus of attention in the United States and around the world since spring 2009 has been the novel H1N1 influenza virus, it is the seasonal influenza viruses that traditionally cause widespread illness during the fall and winter seasons.

The seasonal influenza vaccine will be available soon and people should get vaccinated. "We are encouraging people to get their seasonal influenza vaccine as soon as it is available at their doctor's office or other sites that provide the vaccine," DPHHS Director Anna Whiting Sorrell said.

This vaccine covers three influenza viruses that are expected to show up in North America this fall and winter. Although it is not possible to predict the exact extent to which this year's vaccine will be a good match with these seasonal influenza viruses, the vaccine is the best single step towards protecting yourself and your loved ones, according to state medical officer Dr. Steven Helgerson.

"It is important to note that the protection you get from the vaccine will not wear off before the influenza season is over," Helgerson said. DPHHS has sent recommendations to health care workers across the state to start administering the vaccine for seasonal influenza as soon as they receive it, which can be as early as late August.

In addition, those recommended for the seasonal influenza vaccination covers a wide spectrum, said DPHHS Immunization Section supervisor Lisa Underwood. "Annual vaccination against influenza is recommended for adults and children," Underwood said. "Vaccination is especially important for people who are either at higher risk for influenza complications or are close contacts of persons at higher risk."

Underwood noted that higher risk individuals include those with heart disease, diabetes, respiratory problems such as asthma, or immune deficiencies. In addition, health care workers, persons who care for children, and residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities should get vaccinated. Women who are pregnant or anticipate being pregnant during the influenza season should also receive vaccine.

A vaccine to provide protection against the novel H1N1 influenza virus is being developed and may be available for use this fall, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "The seasonal vaccine will not protect against the novel H1N1 virus that is expected to continue causing illness this fall," Dr. Helgerson noted, "However, it will

very likely provide protection against other influenza viruses that will also be causing illness."

For more information about the seasonal influenza vaccine contact Underwood at 406-444-0065 or visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/flu

DPHHS Subject Matter Expert (SME) Contact:

Lisa Underwood, DPHHS Immunization Section Supervisor, 406-444-0065

Jon Ebel, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, 406-444-0936

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