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Governor

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State Surgeon General

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT:**  
**DATE: 10/13/11**

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## **Flu Season**

“Having a bout with the flu can interrupt your life for three to five days, preventing you from working and caring for loved ones, and may even require hospitalization,” says Dr. Jennifer Bencie, Administrator, Manatee County Health Department. “The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends that everyone 6 months and older get their annual flu vaccination as the best defense against influenza.”

This year’s seasonal flu vaccine protects against three different flu viruses and is a good match for the types of flu viruses that are circulating in our community. The CDC urges everyone to get vaccinated each flu season since immune protection declines over time. For full protection, children younger than 9 years of age who receive a flu vaccination for the first time will need two doses of vaccine given at least four weeks apart. The nasal spray flu vaccine is an option for healthy children who are at least 2 years old and healthy adults up to age 50. People who get vaccinated against seasonal flu can expect to have immunity within two weeks of vaccination. The protection you get from the vaccine will continue throughout the flu season.

People with certain health conditions (asthma, diabetes, heart disease, suppressed immune system and other health issues) are also at high-risk for [pneumonia](#) and other potentially life-threatening complications following a bout with the flu. Influenza spreads easily from person to person. Adults 65 years of age and older remain the group hardest hit by influenza viruses.

Babies under 6 months are too young to get a flu shot. Health officials recommend that all members of their households, including daycare providers, should get vaccinated. This measure protects the infants by preventing those around them from getting ill.

As people age, their immune system’s function tends to decrease. This makes older adults not only more susceptible to infections, but also less responsive to the standard-dose flu vaccination. The CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has included the [Fluzone High-Dose vaccine](#), which is designed to generate a stronger immune response, in their 2011-2012 flu vaccine recommendations for adults 65 years of age and older. **This is a payable benefit through Medicare Part B.** For additional information, contact your health care provider.

The Manatee County Health Department is currently offering flu shots to children 6 months to 18 years of age, free of charge, under the Vaccines for Children Program.

**Beginning 10/17/11**, the Manatee County Health Department is offering flu vaccinations. No appointments necessary, walk-ins welcome.

Children 6 months through 18 years of age ... **Free of charge** (Vaccines for Children Program)

Adult flu vaccinations ..... **\$25**  
Adult pneumonia shots ..... **\$40**

Fluzone High-Dose vaccine will be offered at a later date.

Many pharmacies, including CVS, Walgreens, Publix, K-Mart and Wal-Mart stores, are offering flu shots. Check with your local store for hours and cost. Visit the [Department of Health flu shot finder](#) website to find a store near you.

In addition to getting a vaccination (flu shot), you can help protect yourself and your family against the flu by following these simple steps:

1. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
2. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow, not your bare hand.
3. Stay at home when you are sick. Keep sick children home. Stay home until free from fever at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).

For more information call the Manatee County Health Department at 748-0747 x1269 or visit our website at: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/chdManatee/index.htm>