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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES FLORIDIANS TO HELP PREVENT SEASONAL FLU

TALLAHASSEE - Flu season is here and the Florida Department of Health (DOH) urges residents and visitors to take precautions to help limit their risk of exposure to infection. Compared to most other viral respiratory infections such as the common cold, seasonal influenza often leads to a more severe illness, causing approximately 36,000 individuals in the U.S. to die from this infection and complications each year.

"The most effective measures we can use to fight this illness and safeguard our communities are getting vaccinated and practicing good hygiene habits," said State Surgeon General Dr. Frank Farmer. "Floridians can do simple things to minimize their own risk of exposure to the virus and to prevent its transmission to others if they become ill. If you do these things, you contribute to both your own health and your community's health."

Symptoms of the flu that should be monitored include headache, fever, severe cough, runny nose or body aches. Contact your health care provider immediately if symptoms appear.

DOH urges the following preventive steps:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your children are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except if you need medical care.
- Get re-vaccinated EVERY YEAR because flu viruses change.

The 2011-2012 flu vaccine will protect against influenza A, B and H1N1. Individuals six months of age and older should get a flu vaccination, especially young children, pregnant women, those with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older who are at increased risk for severe flu complications. It is also important for health care workers and other people who live with or care for high risk people to be vaccinated. Since children younger than six months are

too young to receive the vaccine, people who care for them should be vaccinated instead.

To locate available flu vaccine in your community contact your healthcare provider or visit: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Disease_ctrl/immune/flu/flu_locator.htm

For more information, visit the DOH website at www.doh.state.fl.us.

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