FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Dec. 3, 2019

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It’s not too late: Michiganders urged to get flu vaccine before the holidays

LANSING, Mich. – The week of Dec. 1 is National Influenza Vaccination Week and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is reminding Michigan residents that it’s not too late to get vaccinated.

“The flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and your families against flu,” said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health for MDHHS. “It is important to get vaccinated today to prevent yourself from getting sick this holiday season. National Influenza Vaccination Week serves as a great reminder to get a flu vaccine for those who have not done so yet this season.”

Influenza is not the stomach flu but is a contagious respiratory disease caused by different strains of the virus and can result in mild to severe illness. Although thousands of flu-related hospitalizations and deaths are reported every year, only 46.1 percent of Michigan residents reported receiving a flu vaccine last season. Michigan ranks 38th in the nation for flu vaccination coverage and falls below the national average of 49.2 percent.

Last season, CDC estimated that up to 42.9 million people became sick with influenza and up to 61,200 deaths occurred, 143 of which were children. In Michigan, four children died last season due to flu-related complications.

Flu activity is steadily increasing in Michigan and positive flu cases have been reported in the central, southwest and southeast regions. However, other states in the south have reported high flu activity and four flu-associated pediatric deaths have been confirmed nationally for the 2019-2020 flu season so far. It takes about two weeks after the vaccine is administered before the body builds up enough immunity to prevent the flu. Michiganders should get their flu vaccine now to protect themselves before activity peaks in Michigan.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends annual influenza vaccination for all persons ages 6 months and older. There are many flu vaccine options available this season, and residents should speak with a healthcare provider about which is best for them.

There is ample supply of flu vaccines available at many locations throughout Michigan, including doctor’s offices, pharmacies, and local health departments. To find a location near you, visit Vaccinefinder.org. For more information about flu activity in Michigan check out the Michigan Flu Focus weekly newsletter or visit Michigan.gov/flu.

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