

Sept. 1, 2010

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MEDIA NOTE: A list of locations for the public to receive flu shots follows the narrative portion of this news release.

Getting a flu shot is your best defense against several flu viruses

Along with the approaching fall and winter seasons comes an expected increase in seasonal flu viruses.

“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 Sarasota County Health Department community adult immunization coordinator Joan Surso. “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months and older get their annual flu vaccine as the best defense against influenza.”

This year’s seasonal flu vaccine protects against three different flu viruses, including the H1N1 (swine) flu virus, so only one vaccine is needed for most people. 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. During last year’s H1N1 pandemic, health officials reported mild to severe illness and even deaths in pregnant women, as well as younger and healthy individuals. “Adults 65 years of age and older remain the group hardest hit by influenza viruses,” says Surso.

Health officials say that since babies under 6 months are too young to get a flu shot, all members of their households, including daycare providers, should get vaccinated. This 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 2010-2011 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 Sarasota County Flu and Pneumonia Coalition member organizations administer flu shots. Depending on the provider, the cost varies from \$20 to \$35. The exception is the Fluzone High-Dose vaccine, which carries a higher cost. Pneumonia vaccine is about \$45-\$50. Cash or check is accepted. If you have Medicare B, bring a copy of your card with you.

The following Sarasota County Flu and Pneumonia Coalition walk-in clinic partners will begin offering flu and [pneumonia](#) vaccinations:

Sarasota Family Medical Walk-In

6813 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota

941-923-5861

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

***Adults and children 6 months and older**

Sarasota Immediate Care Walk-In

7005 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota

941-870-4440

Monday-Friday: 7 a.m.-7 p.m.

Saturday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

***Adults and children 6 months and older**

Nokomis Walk-In Clinic – Beginning on Sept. 1

621-623 Tamiami Trail, Nokomis

941-485-5645

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Wednesday: 8 a.m.-noon

***Adults and children 9 years and older**

Sarasota County Health Department

2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota

Every Thursday, 3:30-6 p.m.

Sept. 16-Jan. 27 (except for Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 25)

Provided by the following Sarasota County Flu and Pneumonia Coalition partners: Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), All Purpose Health and Sarasota Health Care Services

***Adults and children 9 years and older**

Local CVS and Walgreens stores also are offering flu shots. Check with your local store for hours and cost. Information on additional public flu shot clinics will be available in the coming weeks.

In addition to getting a vaccination (flu shot), you can help protect yourself 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 your elbow or 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 a schedule of seasonal flu shot clinics, call the Sarasota County Health Department's flu information line at 941-861-2800 or visit the website, www.sarasotahealth.org. This information is also available for those who do not have access to a computer at touch-screen health kiosks at the Sarasota County Health Department, Senior Friendship Centers and all local libraries. Those who are hearing-impaired can call the Sarasota County Call Center, TDD line, at 941-861-1833.

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