



# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

## 2011-2012 INFLUENZA SEASON

Influenza (commonly called “flu”) is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. These viruses are spread when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes or touches a surface handled by others. It can be mild or severe and infects millions of Americans every year. On average, more than 226,000 people are hospitalized annually, which includes 20,000 children under the age of 5. About 24,000 people die from complications of the flu yearly. The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get vaccinated. It takes up to two weeks after vaccination for protection (immunity) to develop in the majority of adults. To ensure proper protection from the seasonal flu virus, which can begin to circulate early in the fall, the Department of Health has scheduled immunization clinics from the end of September through October. Persons 9 years and older will be eligible to receive influenza vaccine at Department clinics. The Fluzone High-Dose vaccine, newly approved for people 65 years of age and older, **will not be offered**; however, it may be available from private health care providers.

Each year the seasonal influenza vaccine contains three influenza viruses – one influenza A (H3N2) virus, one influenza A (H1N1) virus and one influenza B virus. The 2009 H1N1 influenza strain is included because it continues to circulate in the U.S. The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are: low grade fever, soreness and aches. Influenza can affect anyone; however, those 65 years of age and older have a higher risk for complications from influenza. Usually people experience a rapid onset of high fever (although not all individuals exhibit fever), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, chills, headache, fatigue and body aches.

Director of Health, Caroline C. Baisley, emphasized, “getting vaccinated for seasonal influenza is the best way to provide protection against circulating influenza viruses. Although many take advantage of getting

vaccinated early, getting vaccinated later in the season can also be beneficial since protection against the virus will last. The traditional flu season begins early October and runs through May in most years and sustained influenza transmission is usually not seen before January or later. The Department of Health is committed to working with medical providers in an effort to provide influenza vaccine in the community, especially to those at highest risk for complications.” People at high risk include children under the age of 5, pregnant women, adults over 65 and people with underlying medical conditions. It should be noted that morbid obesity (BMI  $\geq$  40) is now recognized as a medical risk factor.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older should be immunized; however, it is especially important for the following groups to receive flu vaccine:

- Persons 6 months of age and older with underlying chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, neurological disorders and immunosuppression, that require frequent or ongoing medical management.
- Close contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children and adolescents at high-risk, healthy children younger than 5 years of age and infants under six months of age.
- Adult household contacts of persons at high risk due to medical conditions.
- Healthcare workers and people living in long term care facilities.

**Note:** Seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for all persons aged 6 months of age and older, however, immunizations will not be administered to individuals under 9 years of age at the Department clinics since two doses of flu vaccine will be needed for children who will be receiving flu vaccination for the first time. The second dose is given 4 weeks after the first dose. Parents are advised to contact their pediatricians for an appointment and dose requirements for this age group.

An alternative to the seasonal flu shot for healthy individuals between the ages of 2 and 49 is **FluMist**, the nasal mist flu vaccine. **FluMist** is made with live, weakened flu viruses. Although **FluMist** does not cause the flu when administered, some side effects may occur and include: headache, cough, sore throat, fever and runny nose. **FluMist** is not recommended for those who are pregnant, who have asthma or children under the age of five (5) years with recurrent wheezing. It can be used by persons, including health care workers, who are not caring for severely immunocompromised patients in special care units. Persons in close contact with groups at

high risk for influenza-related complications and others desiring protection against the flu can also use it.

*FluMist* (LAIV) will not be offered in Department Flu Clinics, but may be available in some doctor's offices.

### **Who Should NOT Get the Seasonal Flu Shot**

- People who have a severe allergy to eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to a flu vaccine in the past or are allergic to other components of the vaccine
- People who previously developed Gullain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot
- Children less than 6 months of age
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait until their symptoms lessen before receiving a vaccination

During each scheduled clinic, pneumococcal vaccine will be available to qualified takers. The following list outlines the required criteria:

### **Qualifications for Pneumococcal Vaccine**

- People who smoke and/or have asthma (new)
- Adults 65 years or older
- Adults aged 19-64 who have long-term medical conditions
- Persons who received a pneumococcal vaccination **before** the age of 65 should have a booster if it has been five or more years since the vaccination. Please check with your physician if you don't know the date of your pneumonia vaccine.

“Although the single best way to prevent the flu or pneumonia is to get vaccinated (flu shot, nasal spray flu vaccine and pneumonia shot), there are other ways to protect yourself from respiratory illnesses,” states Director of Family Health, Deborah Travers. Those steps include:

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.** Keep your distance from others when you are sick
- **Stay home from work or school when you are sick** for at least 24 hours after your fever (100° F and above) is gone, except to seek medical care. Your fever should be gone without using fever reducing medications or antiviral drugs. It could take up to one week or more to feel better.

- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you sneeze or cough
- **Wash your hands** with soap and water frequently. If soap and water is not available, alcohol-based cleaners (at least 60% alcohol ingredient) are effective.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth** germs are spread this way.
- **Get plenty of sleep, water, healthy food and exercise**
- **Seek medical care early.** Consult your health care provider immediately if you develop flu symptoms.

During the influenza season, the public is encouraged to call the Department of Health flu information line for up-to-date information at 203-622-3774, or visit the Department's website at [www.greenwichct.org](http://www.greenwichct.org).

**SEASONAL INFLUENZA AND PNEUMONIA IMMUNIZATION CLINIC SCHEDULE –**  
**2011**

Scheduled clinics for persons 9 years of age and older will be the only opportunities to receive vaccination from the Greenwich Department of Health. Residents are advised to contact their physicians after these dates.

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2011**

2:00 - 6:00 PM

**EASTERN GREENWICH CIVIC CENTER**

Harding Road, Old Greenwich

**SENIOR HEALTH FAIR**

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2011**

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**EASTERN GREENWICH CIVIC CENTER**

Harding Road, Old Greenwich

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2011**

2:00 - 6:00 PM

**GREENWICH TOWN HALL**

101 Field Point Road, Greenwich

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2011**

3:00 – 6:00 PM

**BENDHEIM WESTERN GREENWICH CIVIC CENTER**

449 Pemberwick Road, Greenwich

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**FEES AND ACCEPTED INSURANCE**

Participants 65 years of age or older must bring their Connecticut Medicare Part B Card or a fee of **\$32.00** will be charged for influenza immunizations.

The charge for pneumonia immunization is **\$50.00**

**Managed Care Medicare providers do not cover pneumonia immunizations received at public clinics.**

**Medicaid will not be accepted.**

**Credit cards will not be accepted.**

People between the ages of 9 and 64 will be charged a **\$32.00** fee for influenza immunizations and/or **\$50.00** for pneumonia immunizations. Checks should be made payable to the “**TOWN OF GREENWICH**” and if paying with cash, exact change will be appreciated.

Short sleeve shirts and attendance no earlier than 15 minutes before the start of the clinic will be appreciated.

The public is encouraged to call 203-622-3774 prior to attending any clinic. Any changes to the set schedule will be recorded and publicized.