



# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

## 2009-2010 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 and about 36,000 people die from complications of the flu. The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get vaccinated. It will take up to two weeks after vaccination for protection 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 for late September through October.

In the spring of 2009, the emergence of a novel influenza A H1N1 virus appeared in the United States affecting mostly individuals under 65 years of age, with the highest number of cases in persons aged 5-24 years. This virus continues to circulate and is responsible for an ongoing pandemic worldwide. In addition to seasonal influenza vaccine, a separate vaccine solely for protection from the novel H1N1 virus, will be offered once the manufacturing process is complete. Although a shortage of 2009 H1N1 vaccine is **not** expected, there is a possibility that, initially, vaccine quantities could be limited. This, of course, would give rise to vaccine being available first to target groups that are at highest risk for infection or influenza-related complications. Eventually there will be enough vaccine for the entire U.S.

population. Information about vaccine availability and other pertinent information will be forthcoming at a later date.

The symptoms of the novel H1N1 virus and seasonal influenza virus are similar. Usually people experience a rapid onset of fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, chills, headache, fatigue and body aches. A significant number of people who have been infected with H1N1 virus have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Symptoms can often be severe and last for many days. Most persons with influenza recover within two to seven days.

Director of Health, Caroline C. Baisley, emphasized that “getting vaccinated for seasonal influenza early in September or later can be beneficial since protection against the virus will last. Also, sustained influenza transmission is usually not seen before January or later, in most years. The Department of Health is committed to working with medical providers in an effort to provide both influenza vaccines in the community, especially to those at highest risk for complications.”

Healthy adults 18 years of age or older who wish to reduce their risk of getting the flu can get vaccinated at the Department’s seasonal flu clinics. Individuals in the general public considered high risk groups should also get vaccinated. Individuals of high risk include:

- Adults 50 years or older
- Pregnant women
- Adults over 18 years of age with underlying chronic medical conditions requiring frequent or ongoing medical management.
- Household contacts 18 years or older and out-of-home caregivers of infants under 6 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 also recommended for children 6 months – 18 years of age, however immunization will not be administered to individuals under 18 years of age at scheduled clinics. Parents are advised to contact their pediatricians. Those who need assistance from the Department's Family Health Division are encouraged to call 622-7854 for consultation.

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 that do not cause the flu when administered. Although *FluMist* is not recommended for those who are pregnant, 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) may be available in some doctor's offices and pharmacies.

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

- People who have a hypersensitivity or 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 Guillain-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**

- Adults 65 years or older
- Adults aged 18-64 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 is to get vaccinated (flu shot or nasal spray flu vaccine), 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 when you are sick** for at least 24 hours after your fever (100° F and above) is gone. 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 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). Residents should also contact their medical providers for seasonal vaccine availability and H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. Also, stay tuned for changes to clinic schedules through local media coverage.

**Seasonal Influenza and Pneumonia Immunization Clinic Schedule – 2009**

Scheduled clinics will be the only opportunities to receive vaccination from the Greenwich Department of Health. Residents are advised to contact their physician after these dates.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2009**

2:00 - 6:00 PM

**EASTERN GREENWICH CIVIC CENTER***Harding Road, Old Greenwich***TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2009**

2:00 - 6:00 PM

**EASTERN GREENWICH CIVIC CENTER**

Harding Road, Old Greenwich

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2009**

2:00 – 6:00 PM

**CHRIST CHURCH**

254 East Putnam Avenue

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2009**

2:00 - 6:00 PM

**CHRIST CHURCH**

254 East Putnam Avenue

*Senior Health Fair***TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2009**

9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**EASTERN GREENWICH CIVIC CENTER**

Harding Road, Old Greenwich

Participants 65 years of age or older must bring their Connecticut Medicare Part B Card or a fee of \$30.00 will be charged for each immunization. The only HMO accepted will be HealthNet Medicare

**Medicaid will not be accepted.**

**Credit cards will not be accepted.**

Adults between the ages of 18 and 64 will be charged a \$30.00 fee for each immunization. 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 that 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.