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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOMMENDS INFLUENZA VACCINATION FOR HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS, HEALTH CARE WORKERS

TALLAHASSEE-Florida Department of Health (DOH), in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations, is encouraging high-risk individuals and health care workers to be given priority for ongoing vaccination efforts. Today, the CDC announced an unusually strong consumer demand for influenza vaccine and are working with vaccine manufacturers, medical professionals, and others to assess the status of the current flu vaccine supply in the United States.

"It is clear that a great number of folks have heard the call and protected themselves against influenza by receiving the flu shot," DOH Secretary of Health John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., said. "We encourage all to get vaccinated, but it is important to take care of Florida's most vulnerable first - - our elderly, our sick, and our youngest."

This year, Florida Department of Health county health departments received more than 275,000 doses of flu vaccine, an increase of over 40 percent from the number of Floridians vaccinated by DOH last year. In a typical year, 70-75 million Americans receive a flu shot. This year manufacturers produced approximately 83 million doses of flu vaccine. The United States has never used more than 80 million doses of flu vaccine in a season.

High-risk individuals who should be vaccinated against influenza include:

- Persons 50 years and older;
- Residents and employees of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house persons of any age who have long-term illnesses;
- Persons 6 months of age and older who have chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma; or need regular medical care; or had to be in a hospital because of metabolic diseases (like diabetes), chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system (including immune system problems caused by medicine or by infection with HIV/AIDS);
- Children and teenagers 6 months to 18 years who are on long-term aspirin therapy and therefore could develop Reye syndrome after the flu; and
- Women who will be more than 3 months pregnant during the flu season.

Health care workers and additional individuals who should be vaccinated include:

- Doctors, nurses, and other employees in hospitals and doctors' offices, including emergency response workers;



- People who provide home care to those in high-risk groups; and
- Household members (including children) of people in high-risk groups.
- Children aged 6 to 23 months and caregivers of children younger than 6 months are also encouraged to receive flu shots because children younger than 24 months may be at higher risk for complications from influenza.

For healthy persons, simple steps can be taken to protect against flu. Frequently washing hands and avoiding touching the nose, eyes, and mouth will help avoid transmitting or getting the flu or other respiratory infections, like a cold.

Precautionary measures include:

- Clean your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- After coughing or sneezing, always clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.

For more information about influenza and steps to protect individuals and families, visit www.cdc.gov.

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