



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Health Commissioner Gets Flu Shot: Encourages All Vermonters to Get Vaccinated

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BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Health is advising everyone 6 months and older to get vaccinated early this flu season, as vaccine is now widely available at public clinics, with health care providers and at many worksites. Flu vaccine is safe and effective.

“There’s every reason to get vaccinated,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “Even healthy people can get the flu, and be out of work or school for a week or two. But even worse, we can spread the virus to people who are very young, very old, have chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes, or to pregnant women who are more likely to have serious consequences. And even healthy people can get seriously ill, be hospitalized, or die from the flu.”

Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Only those children 6 months to 8 years of age, who did not receive at least one dose of flu vaccine in 2010-2011 will need a second dose this year. Getting vaccinated with the flu shot or nasal spray now will give protection that lasts throughout the flu season.

Dr. Chen received his flu shot today at the Health Department’s Burlington office from Angie Thomas, RN, of the Visiting Nurse Association of Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties (VNA).

The 2011-2012 flu vaccine will protect against three different strains of highly contagious flu viruses expected to cause illness this season: the 2009 H1N1 virus, as well an H3N2 and an influenza B virus. While vaccination is the single best protection against the flu, taking simple everyday actions can help keep illness from spreading:

- Cover your cough or sneeze every time with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often and well with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Plan ahead. Stock up with food and supplies in case you need to stay home for awhile.
- Stay home if you’re sick for at least 24 hours after fever is gone.

The Health Department has no reports yet of flu activity in the state, but that doesn’t mean flu viruses are not already circulating here, Dr. Chen said.

Flu symptoms include fever, body aches, tiredness, headache, dry cough and fever. While most people recover in a week or two, many thousands of people in the U.S. die each year from complications of the flu, and many more are hospitalized.

Through its Vaccines for Children program, the Vermont Department of Health provides influenza vaccine to health care providers to immunize children age 6 months through 18 years old.

Parents can schedule a flu shot by calling their child’s health care provider. If a child does not have a health care provider, shots are available at the Health Department’s 12 District Offices statewide.

Flu vaccinations are also given at public clinics conducted throughout the state by the home health agencies and the Visiting Nurse Association, and also in many grocery stores and pharmacies.

To find a **flu vaccine clinic** in you area, go to the Health Department’s website at healthvermont.gov or dial 2-1-1.

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