



**For Immediate Release: December 6, 2017**

**Media Contact:**

Vermont Department of Health  
802-863-7281

**Health Officials: The Time to Get Your Flu Shot is Now**

*Find a flu shot near you at [healthvermont.gov/flu](http://healthvermont.gov/flu)*

BURLINGTON – Vermont health officials say we may be in for a rough flu season, and are advising people to get their flu shot to protect both themselves as well as others, such as children too young to be vaccinated.

“Especially now, during the holiday season of crowds and gatherings of friends and family, everyone older than 6 months should get a flu shot,” said Vermont Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD. “Flu viruses are notoriously unpredictable, but from the information I’ve received, all indications point to a possibly severe flu season in Vermont.”

Flu is already widespread in several states. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, several strains of influenza virus are in circulation. The dominant flu virus strain is H3N2, which can result in more severe illnesses than other strains. While this year’s vaccine works well against many of the flu virus strains out there, recent studies indicate the vaccine is less effective against the H3N2 strain. Health officials stress that an annual flu shot can still help lessen the severity of illness, and for people at high risk of complications from flu, it can be a life saver. Those at high-risk include: pregnant women, young children, adults 50 years and older, and people with chronic health conditions.

For older adults – especially those with chronic respiratory conditions – complications from flu often lead to a sharp increase in hospitalizations and potentially serious illness, including pneumonia and bronchitis. Such infections can dramatically increase the risk of heart attack and stroke for months after the illness has cleared.

“Human immune defenses become weaker with age, which places older people at greater risk of severe illness,” explained Dr. Levine. He encourages people age 65 and older to talk with

their doctor about getting one of the [vaccines](#) designed to give older people a better immune response, and therefore, better protection against flu.

“The absolute best thing you can do to prevent illness, hospitalizations and even death from flu complications, is to get your flu shot,” said Dr. Levine. “Even if it’s not a perfect match, it’s very important, not just for yourself, but also to protect those with whom you may come in contact – including babies too young to get vaccinated and people who have weakened immune systems. It is not an understatement to say their lives may depend on you.”

“The flu vaccine takes two weeks to become fully effective,” said Dr. Levine. “so now is the time to get yours.”

Flu shots are available at more than 300 locations around Vermont. To find a location near you to get the flu vaccine, go to [healthvermont.gov/flu](http://healthvermont.gov/flu) or dial 2-1-1.

**For health news, alerts and information,** visit [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov)

Join us on [Facebook](#)

Follow us on [Twitter](#)

###