



## Flu Season 2011-12 (revised 8/16/11)

**Issue Description:** Influenza is caused by a virus spread person-to-person, through the air and on hard surfaces in droplets from sneezes and coughs. Illness from the flu can last up to 10 days, and includes such symptoms as sneezing, coughing, runny nose, congestion, fever, muscle aches and headache. For some people, the flu can be a very serious, even deadly disease, which could lead to secondary infections such as pneumonia. In Oregon, the influenza season usually peaks in February and March, but can begin as early as the fall. **Every flu season is different, and influenza can affect people differently. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.**

### Talking Points:

1. Each year, scientists determine the three flu strains that are likely to cause the most disease and include them in the flu vaccination for that season. The 2011-12 seasonal flu shot protects against the same strains as last year: H1N1, H3N2 and Influenza B. People who had a flu vaccination last year should also get seasonal flu shot this year; immunity may have worn off. Manufacturers began shipping flu vaccine in July and will continue through the end of the year. Seasonal flu vaccine is manufactured by strict federal standards and thoroughly tested before it is offered to the public. This year, the FDA approved an intradermal influenza vaccine for people ages 18-64 that is injected into the skin instead of the muscle. It uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot and requires fewer antigens.
2. Vaccination is the most effective way to avoid catching the flu virus, and the best way to protect yourself and your community from illness. The CDC recommends **everyone aged 6 months and older should receive an annual influenza vaccination**. Children 6 months through 8 years may need two doses depending on previous flu vaccine history, so it is important to talk to your provider. A seasonal flu vaccination is especially recommended for people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, people living or caring for babies six months and younger or people who are unable to be vaccinated because of health reasons, and all health care workers.
3. In addition to vaccination, these preventive measures can help stop flu and other diseases from circulating:
  - Cover your cough and sneeze.
  - Wash your hands often. Use soap and warm water.
  - Stay home when you're sick. Protect others at school and work by staying home at least 24-hours after a fever (100+ degrees) subsides.
  - Clean surfaces. Flu germs can live for hours on hard surfaces. Make sure your home and workspace are wiped down frequently, especially where children are playing.
4. Flu vaccine is available from health care providers, local health departments and many pharmacies (for people 11 and older). To locate a flu shot near you, visit [www.flu.oregon.gov](http://www.flu.oregon.gov) or call the Oregon Flu Hotline at 1-800-978-3040

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