



News Release

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Flu: the gift no one wants to give or receive

It's not too late to get vaccinated

OLYMPIA — The holidays are synonymous with travel, parties, and get-togethers. And that creates opportunities for people to spread illnesses like the flu. The state Department of Health recommends getting a flu vaccine to protect yourself and your family and avoid falling under the weather this holiday season.

The flu is more serious than the common cold, and it can cause complications that lead to hospitalization and death. A Tri-Cities area woman in her 50s was recently reported as the state's first laboratory-confirmed flu-related death this season. The virus can spread before a person knows they're sick. Many people with flu have a fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, and fatigue.

You can do something about it – get vaccinated and use good health manners to avoid getting or giving flu this season. Cover your cough, wash your hands, and stay home and away from others when you're sick. It takes two weeks after vaccination to be protected.

“Getting a yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important thing you can do to protect yourself and avoid spreading the flu to others, especially people who may be more vulnerable,” said State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes. “There are many options of the flu vaccine this year. Ask your health care provider about which one is best for you and your family.”

The flu is highly contagious and can make even healthy people very sick. Flu vaccines are recommended for everyone six months and older. It's especially important for people at high-risk – such as young kids; people 65 and older; pregnant women; and people with chronic conditions, including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and neurologic conditions. Babies under six months are

Flu shots guard against holiday illness

December 12, 2013

Page 2

too young to get vaccinated. People in close contact with babies should get vaccinated to protect the infants.

Some kids under nine may need two doses about a month apart. All recommended immunizations, including flu vaccines, are given at no cost for all kids in our state through age 18. Most health plans cover flu vaccinations for adults. For more resources call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

Flu vaccines are available at many locations including health care professional's offices, pharmacies, and some local health agencies. Check the [flu vaccine finder](#) to find out where to get flu vaccine in your community.

Don't let the flu spoil your holiday plans. Get vaccinated now to help protect you, your loved ones, and your community through the holidays and the rest of flu season. Watch our [flu video](#) with Washington families talking about why they get vaccinated each year. It also features Secretary of Health John Wiesman.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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