



News Release

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Flu season is here – vaccines are now available for all ages

OLYMPIA -- Fall brings crisp mornings, colorful leaves, pumpkins on porches, and an unwelcome visitor: flu. Thankfully, flu vaccine has also arrived and is now widely available for everyone in the family for protection throughout the season.

“We’re seeing some flu cases in Washington,” says State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy.

“Getting a flu shot every year is the best way to protect yourself and your family from this very serious illness. Medical providers and pharmacies in Washington have flu vaccines to protect you from this year’s flu strains. Anyone 6 months and older should get vaccinated.”

Data from the National Immunization Survey, released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), show that flu vaccination rates in Washington are not where they should be. Only half of Washingtonians got vaccinated during the 2014-2015 flu season. While about 70 percent of children from 6 months to 4 years old got vaccinated against flu, only 43 percent of kids 13-17 years old received the flu vaccine. When fewer people get flu vaccine, flu spreads easily and quickly to vulnerable family and community members.

Young children, pregnant women, people 65 years and older, and those with chronic medical conditions like diabetes, heart disease or lung disease are at high risk for complications of flu. Anyone can get flu, including healthy young people. Flu is a highly contagious and serious disease that can cause moderate to severe illness. Flu can lead to hospitalization and even be fatal. It spreads easily by coughing and sneezing and people can spread the flu before they know they are sick. Symptoms may include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, body aches, tiredness, and headache.

Yearly flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. Some babies and children between 6 months and 8 years old need two doses of the vaccine this season to be fully

protected. Parents should make time to get their young children both doses for full protection. Ask your health care provider for advice about how many doses your child needs.

“Babies younger than 6 months can’t get the flu vaccine, so it’s important for others to get vaccinated to protect them. Flu vaccine is available everywhere and, since we’re starting to see flu cases, it’s important to get the vaccine now,” says Dr. Lofy.

Washington provides all recommended vaccines at no cost for kids from birth through age 18, and they’re available from health care providers across the state. Most health plans cover the cost for adults too. Although health care providers may charge an office-visit fee and an administration fee for the vaccine, a family that can’t afford to pay can ask that the administration fee be waived.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, visit the online [flu vaccine finder](#), call your [local health agency](#), visit the [ParentHelp123 resource finder](#), or call the Family Health Hotline, 1-800-322-2588.

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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