



# News Release

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## **Flu season is here – there’s still time to protect you and your family**

**OLYMPIA** -- The holidays bring us together to share memories and good times with friends and family. Make sure, though, that you’re not also sharing illnesses like flu. Getting a flu shot is the best protection for everyone in the family and is widely available this season.

“During the holidays, it’s easy to spread germs when you’re in close contact with loved ones. It’s important to get all family members vaccinated against flu, so you can spend more healthy time together,” said State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. “Flu is a serious illness that is especially dangerous for older people, pregnant women, young children, and those with certain chronic medical conditions. You can spread the virus to others before you know you’re sick.”

Flu activity typically increases in the winter months when people spend more time indoors around each other. People who haven’t been vaccinated against flu still have time to get the vaccine before the season reaches its peak here in Washington. Information on flu activity in Washington can be tracked through [Flu News](#) (PDF), which is updated weekly.

National Influenza Vaccination Week is December 6-12 and a good time to encourage flu vaccination for people 6 months and older. Flu vaccine usually takes two weeks to be fully protective, so it’s important to get vaccinated now.

“We need to protect the most vulnerable people around us,” said Dr. Lofy. “It takes all of us to prevent the spread of flu.”

Flu can make existing health conditions worse and can lead to hospitalization and death. If you’re at increased risk for complications and have flu symptoms, contact your doctor or clinic right away. Antiviral medications help, but they must be prescribed by a doctor and are most effective when started within 48 hours of the onset of illness.

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There are many flu vaccine choices, and they are available in multiple locations, including health care provider offices, pharmacies, and even through some employers. The [online “vaccine finder”](#) is a good tool for finding vaccine near you, or call the [local health department](#) in your area. People can also find a clinic by calling the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

The state health department provides all recommended [childhood vaccines](#), including flu vaccine, at no cost for kids through age 18. Health care providers may charge for the office visit or include a fee to give the vaccine. The health care provider may waive the fee if you ask.

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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