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Health Department Seasonal Flu Vaccination Clinics Begin October 18th

Chattanooga, TN- On Monday, October 11th, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department will begin making appointments for seasonal flu vaccinations. Starting October 18th, flu vaccine will be offered in the Health Department's Third Street, Ooltewah, Sequoyah and Birchwood clinics. Residents can schedule flu vaccination appointments at any of these locations by calling between the hours of 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

- Third Street Facility – 209-8050
- Ooltewah Health Center – 238-4269
- Sequoyah Health Center – 842-3031
- Birchwood Health Center – 961-0446

“We are excited that it is easier than ever for anyone over 6 months of age to receive influenza vaccine, regardless of risk group,” said Tammy Burke. “There are no priorities given to certain high risk or age groups as there have been in recent years, there are ample supplies of vaccine and there are multiple locations in the community where a person can get flu vaccine.”

The CDC recommends annual flu vaccine for everyone age 6 months and older to reduce their risk of getting the flu. It is also important that the public understands that some people are at a high risk of having serious complications from seasonal flu. These people and those who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications are especially urged to be vaccinated.

People who should get seasonal flu vaccinations each year are:

- 1. Anyone 6 months of age and older who wants to reduce their risk of becoming ill with seasonal influenza.**
- 2. People at high risk for complications from the flu, including:**
 - Children aged 6 months until their 5th birthday
 - Pregnant women or women who will become pregnant during the influenza season
 - People 50 years of age and older
 - People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
 - People who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities
 - People who are morbidly obese (BMI \geq 40)

3. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu (see above)
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)
- Healthcare workers

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. The viruses in the vaccine change each year is based on what the predominantly circulating flu viruses have been in the previous flu season. The [2010-2011 flu vaccine](#) will protect against 2009 H1N1, and two other influenza viruses (an H3N2 virus and an influenza B virus). It takes two to four weeks after the vaccination for protective antibodies to develop. Because immunity wanes over time, annual vaccination is necessary, regardless of which strains are in any given year's vaccine.

The health department is offering the vaccine as an injection (shot) and in the nasal mist form (FluMist™). The flu shot is approved for people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions. As an alternative to the flu shot, healthy, non-pregnant, people ages 2 to 49 years may choose the nasal spray vaccine, FluMist™.

The cost of the flu shot or nasal spray vaccine is \$30. Pneumonia vaccine will also be available for \$52. Flu and pneumonia vaccines combined are \$67. Any patient who gets a flu or pneumonia vaccine can get a tetanus shot for free. The Health Department accepts Medicare Part B, Blue Advantage, Railroad Medicare, TennCare, cash, or check.

The flu, or influenza, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus that can be spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Flu symptoms typically include: fever, cough, sore throat, headache, chills, muscle aches, and extreme tiredness. For most people, the flu lasts only a few days, but some people can get much sicker. The flu can lead to pneumonia, and can be dangerous for people with heart or breathing conditions.

Each year in the United States, between 5 and 20 percent of the population is infected with the flu. About 36,000 people die and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized because of flu complications.

Persons sick with the flu should stay home; wash their hands frequently; cover their noses or mouths when coughing or sneezing; and drink plenty of fluids. They also can contact their doctor, who may prescribe antiviral drugs that can help reduce the time it takes for symptoms to improve.

“We are encouraging everyone who can be vaccinated to do so, as it is the single best way to protect yourself against the flu,” said Tammy Burke. “And just as important, you should get vaccinated to protect the people you care about, especially if you have contact with infants, young children, the elderly or someone with chronic illness.”

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