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Health Department Receives Additional Supply of Seasonal Flu Vaccine

Chattanooga, TN- On Monday, December 7th, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department will start making appointments for a limited supply of seasonal flu vaccines. In addition to two of the Health Department's satellite clinic locations, Sequoyah and Ooltewah Health Centers, the Health Department will also be offering the vaccine at Eastgate Town Center. Residents can schedule flu vaccination appointments at any of these locations by calling the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department hotline at (423) 209-8393.

"It's important to understand that the H1N1 vaccine does not protect against the seasonal influenza virus," said Tammy Burke, Director of Clinical Services at the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department. "Although we have recently focused efforts on the H1N1 virus, seasonal influenza disease is now beginning to circulate in our community and will continue to do so through the spring. In our area, seasonal influenza disease typically peaks in late winter, so now is a good time to be vaccinated. The Health Department is pleased to have received these additional doses and to make them available in our community," Burke continued.

Nationally, there are more than 36,000 deaths and more than 200,000 hospitalizations caused yearly by seasonal flu. The single best way to protect yourself and your family against the flu is to get a flu vaccine. The Health Department is encouraging people to receive a seasonal flu shot in addition to practicing measures designed to stop the spread of illness, including flu viruses. These preventative measures include frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home if you are sick.

The CDC is recommending vaccines to all persons who want to reduce their risk of getting seasonal flu. The CDC also recommends that certain people should get vaccinated each year. They are either people who are at a high risk of having serious complications from seasonal flu or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications.

People who should get seasonal flu vaccinations each year are:

1. Anyone 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
- 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.

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

For the seasonal flu vaccine, the health department is offering flu shots and 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 people ages 2 to 49 years may choose the nasal spray vaccine FluMist.

The cost of the seasonal flu shot or nasal spray vaccine is \$25 for adults and \$20 for children under age 19. The Health Department accepts Medicare Part B, Blue Advantage, TennCare, cash, or check. H1N1 influenza vaccine is still being offered free of charge.

Both seasonal and H1N1 influenza are 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.

The Health Department hotline will be taking appointments for seasonal and H1N1 influenza vaccine. Call (423) 209-8393 to make an appointment. The hotline will be open Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM. For more information on the flu and flu vaccine, call (423) 209-8393, visit www.flu.gov, or <http://health.hamiltontn.org/>.

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