

Press Release

Hamilton County Health Department

Web: health.hamiltontn.org



****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

October 5, 2026

Hamilton County Health & Social Services, Erlanger Hospital, and Community Partners Unite to Encourage Vaccinations Ahead of Cold and Flu Season

HAMILTON COUNTY, TN— Hamilton County Health & Social Services, Erlanger Hospital, and community partners are joining forces to encourage residents to protect themselves, their families, and the broader community by staying current on recommended and school-required vaccinations ahead of cold and flu season.

Local health and medical leaders are reminding residents about the importance of vaccination and the community resources available to help families access potentially lifesaving vaccines.

Respiratory illnesses such as influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) circulate more widely during the fall and winter. Vaccination remains an important tool for reducing the risk of serious illness and protecting vulnerable community members. RSV can cause serious respiratory illness, particularly among infants, young children, and older adults.

“In the pediatric ICU, we care for children who may have been healthy a week ago and now need help breathing. RSV and the flu can both have that effect on a baby or young child, and very quickly. Some may need oxygen, some may need a breathing tube, and some spend days in intensive care,” said Dr. Marvin Hall, Chief Medical Officer for the Children’s Hospital at Erlanger. “The Children’s Hospital at Erlanger sees this each winter. We’re coming together as a community now because the best time to protect a child is before these viruses start spreading. An RSV immunization and a flu shot this fall can keep many families out of the hospital.”

Health officials also encourage parents and caregivers to review their children’s vaccination records and confirm that they are current on all school-required vaccines. Keeping children up to date helps protect individual students and reduce the spread of vaccine-preventable illnesses in schools, daycares, and the broader community.

As part of this community-wide effort, the Hamilton County Health Department will participate in the [statewide Fight Flu TN](#) initiative by offering free flu shots to individuals ages six months and older on Tuesday, October 20, 2026.

“Each year, we see firsthand how detrimental flu season can be to our community. It can mean missed days of school or work, increased visits to healthcare providers, and for some, serious illness & hospitalization,” said Dr. Stephen Miller, Health Officer for Hamilton County. “That is why Fight Flu TN is so vital. We must ensure everyone in our community has low-barrier access to potentially lifesaving vaccines. By making the flu shot free and easily accessible, we are giving more people the opportunity to protect themselves and our community.”

Free flu shots will be available at:

Location – Adults and Children:

- J.A. Henry Community YMCA:
 - 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
 - 3500 Dodds Ave #108, Chattanooga, TN 37407
- The Samaritan Center (The Health Department’s Mobile Unit)
 - 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

- 9231 Lee Hwy, Ooltewah, TN 37363

Details:

- No appointment or insurance is required.
- Adults 18+ and children ages six months and older may participate.
- Children's vaccines are available at all flu vaccination event sites.
- ONLY FREE THIS DAY – while supplies last.
- Bilingual staff & an ASL interpreter will be on site(s).

The flu vaccine is safe and effective. It can protect against common types of influenza and reduce the risk of the virus's most serious symptoms and outcomes. Nationally, flu vaccination is estimated to have prevented approximately 10 million illnesses, 5 million medical visits, 180,000 hospitalizations, and 12,000 deaths during the 2024–2025 influenza season.

Pregnant people, infants, older adults, and individuals with chronic medical conditions face a higher risk of severe flu complications. Flu symptoms may include coughing, fatigue, fever, headache, muscle aches, sore throat, and a stuffy or runny nose.

For more information about precautions against respiratory viral illnesses, including influenza, visit the [Tennessee Department of Health's Respiratory Viral Illness webpage](#).

Additional resources

- Questions? Call the Health Department at 423-209-8000.
- Free interpretation services are available at all Health Department clinics.
- For Health Department information, visit: [Health.HamiltonTN.org](https://www.health.hamiltontn.org)
- To read this information in Spanish, visit the Health Department's Spanish Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SaludHamiltonTN>