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HEALTHY HOLIDAYS INCLUDE GETTING A FLU VACCINE

Get your flu vaccination to protect yourself and those around you from the flu

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Panama City, Fla.— As Floridians prepare to celebrate the holidays with family and friends, it's important for residents and visitors to take precautions to keep everyone safe. Getting a flu vaccine is one of the best ways to protect yourself and your loved ones. Unlike Covid-19, most of us have general knowledge about flu season and the flu—a respiratory disease that can lead to serious illness, hospitalization or death. But like Covid-19, flu shares many of the same symptoms: fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle pain or body aches and headache.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that everyone six months and older get a flu vaccine every year. For more information: FluFreeFlorida.com.
- People should be vaccinated at least two weeks before traveling because it can take a few weeks for vaccine immunity to develop.
- Flu vaccines are offered at health care providers' offices, clinics, county health departments, pharmacies, schools and college health centers: VaccineFinder.org.

DOH-Bay is now offering flu vaccines for children ages 6 months to 18 years of age at no charge through the Vaccines for Children program. DOH-Bay also offers adult flu vaccines for \$36.24 and high-dose flu vaccine for \$69.77. Vaccines are available by appointment only. Call (850) 872-4455 and follow the prompts for an appointment. If your organization is interested in on-site flu vaccinations, please contact Christine Bartels at Christine.Bartels@FLHealth.gov or call (850) 252-9550.

Getting the flu shot each year is important but reducing illness and hospitalization from flu is even more critical this year to protect frontline health care workers and hospital systems who will continue to care for people with COVID-19 and other illnesses. Also, having the flu and COVID-19 at the same time could lead to a negative outcome.

The flu and COVID-19 are respiratory illnesses, but until there is a steady vaccine supply against COVID-19, the way to help prevent these two viruses from circulating at the same time is to get your flu vaccine now.

Additionally, there will be less spread of the flu and COVID-19 if everyone continues to:

- Stay home if you're sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces in your home, school or office
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly

Getting vaccinated if you are healthy helps to protect our most vulnerable populations. People at higher risk for flu-related complications include children less than 5, adults over the age of 65, people with compromised immune systems, pregnant women and people who have existing medical conditions, such as asthma and obesity.

To learn more about the flu, visit the following:

- General flu information- cdc.gov/flu.
- People at high risk for complications- cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm.
- Flu vaccine safety- cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/vaccinesafety.htm.
- VaccineFinder.org- www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html.

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