



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Barbara Fox
502-564-6786, ext. 3102

Beth Fisher
502-564-6786, ext.3101

**National Influenza Vaccination Week: December 3-9,
2017**

Give yourself the gift of health this holiday season

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 4, 2017) – As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, officials with the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, are encouraging Kentuckians to get a flu vaccination during National Influenza Vaccination Week, Dec. 3-9, to reduce the spread of illness this holiday season.

"Getting a flu vaccine is an early holiday gift you can give to yourself and your family," said Jeffrey Howard, M.D., acting commissioner of DPH. "During the holidays families and friends will gather, which increases the potential for exposure to the flu virus. We urge everyone who hasn't received the flu vaccine, particularly those at high risk for complications related to the flu, to check with their regular health care professional, local health departments or other vaccine providers."

DPH officials report weekly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as part of statewide flu surveillance efforts. Kentucky currently is reporting 80 laboratory-

confirmed cases of flu with the state flu activity level currently classified as “regional”. The weekly report is now available online at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/epi/Influenza.htm> and will be updated each Friday before noon.

National Influenza Vaccination Week is a weeklong observance that serves as a reminder to those people who have not yet received a flu vaccine that the time to get vaccinated continues into winter – through February or later, when flu season typically peaks. Because it takes about two weeks for the body to develop protective antibodies against the flu following vaccination, Kentuckians who have not had a chance to be vaccinated should seek out the opportunity now. Vaccine supplies are considered plentiful at this time, but people are urged to call their providers or pharmacies to check on availability.

Throughout the week, the CDC and DPH will highlight the importance of vaccinations for those people at high risk, their close contacts and all those who want to be protected against the flu. In addition, good health habits such as washing hands often with soap and warm water, avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth, and staying at home from work or school when sick will also be emphasized.

The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends flu vaccine for all individuals six months of age and older. People who are strongly encouraged to receive the flu vaccine because they may be at higher risk for complications or negative consequences include:

- Children age six months through 59 months;
- Women who are or will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- Persons 50 years of age or older;

- Persons with extreme obesity (Body Mass Index of 40 or greater);
- Persons aged six months and older with chronic health problems;
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;
- Household contacts (including children) and caregivers of children aged ≤59 months

(i.e., aged <five years, particularly contacts of children aged <five years, particularly contacts of children aged <six months) and adults aged ≥50 years;

- Household contacts and caregivers or people who live with a person at high-risk for complications from the flu; and
- Health care workers, including physicians, nurses, and other workers in inpatient and outpatient-care settings, medical emergency-response workers (e.g., paramedics and emergency medical technicians), employees of nursing home and long-term care facilities who have contact with patients or residents, and students in these professions who will have contact with patients.

Dr. Howard added, “You should also follow the advice your parents gave you to prevent flu and other illnesses that tend to circulate at this time of year – wash your hands frequently, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and stay home when you’re sick.”

Adequate supplies of flu vaccine are expected to be available for this year’s season. Only injectable influenza vaccine formulations will be distributed in the United States. Vaccination can be given any time during the flu season.

Infection with the flu virus can cause fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing and body aches. Flu can be very contagious. For more information on influenza or the availability of flu vaccine, Kentuckians should contact their primary care medical professional, local health department or local pharmacy. Influenza information is also available online at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies

in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.