



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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ADPH works with providers to target influenza vaccine to persons at highest risk

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health is partnering with the private sector in efforts to ensure that those persons at highest risk of severe complications of influenza have access to influenza vaccinations. The Alabama Department of Public Health is working with physicians, pharmacists, and other vaccine providers through the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, the Alabama Pharmacy Association, the Alabama State Board of Pharmacy and the Alabama Retail Association to inform the public that flu shots will be restricted this season.

"We are asking that pharmacies delay their vaccine initiatives and then target them to high-risk individuals. Both small and large pharmacies have been very cooperative in directing all available influenza vaccine for this season to those individuals at highest risk and health care workers who provide their direct care," said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. "We urge other healthy Alabamians to forego or delay influenza vaccination this year."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in coordination with its Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP), issued interim recommendations for influenza vaccination during the 2004-05 season which are as follows:

Priority groups for vaccination with inactivated influenza vaccine are:

- all children aged 6–23 months,
- adults aged 65 years or older,
- persons aged 2–64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions,
- all women who will be pregnant during influenza season,
- residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities,
- children 6 months-18 years of age on chronic aspirin therapy,
- healthcare workers with direct patient care, and out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children aged less than 6 months.

Dr. Williamson said, "Regrettably, vaccine shortages dictate that there will not be enough vaccine for everyone this year. There will be clients who will not be able to receive immunizations this year at their local health departments this year unless they fall into the high-risk groups."

Mass influenza vaccination clinics scheduled for four Alabama cities have been cancelled because of the lack of influenza vaccine. The Alabama Department of Public Health has also printed posters listing the high-risk groups who are eligible to receive influenza immunizations this season.

Other steps the department is taking include

- Delaying and revising implementation of the Worksite Wellness Program's offering of influenza vaccine
- Assessing the status of vaccine availability in the state
- Maintaining surveillance of influenza illness
- Providing reference laboratory testing services to identify influenza viruses

Information regarding influenza will be updated on the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at www.adph.org.

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