



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Health Department to survey medical providers in Alabama concerning influenza vaccine

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health will undertake a massive telephone survey of the medical community in Alabama to better understand how much influenza vaccine has been ordered and how much is now available. Department staff will telephone approximately 7,000 medical providers statewide on Oct. 18 and 19.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "I want to notify these facilities about the upcoming calls and urge them to have someone available next Monday and Tuesday to respond to the telephone survey. This information will help us determine where in the state there are pockets of needs and will help us decide how to distribute the vaccine the department has received."

The department will work with physicians, pharmacies, hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living facilities to ensure that individuals at high risk receive influenza vaccines this year because of the national vaccine shortage.

Healthy adults have been asked to defer receiving their influenza shots so the elderly and other high-risk patients can be immunized. Vaccine is to be reserved for babies and toddlers ages 6-23 months; people 65 or older; anyone with a chronic condition such as heart or lung disease; pregnant women; nursing home residents; children on aspirin therapy; health care workers who care for high-risk groups; and anyone who cares for or lives with babies younger than 6 months.

Medical providers will be asked about the number of doses of influenza vaccine they ordered, the number of doses they have on hand, the types of vaccine ordered and manufacturer, the number of doses received, and number of doses needed.

"I know many people are anxious about where they can obtain a vaccination this year," Dr. Williamson added. "Because there is no evidence that influenza is circulating in Alabama, the situation is not urgent, and it is possible that additional vaccine will be made available."

Some common-sense actions people can take to reduce the chances of contracting influenza are as follows:

- When coughing or sneezing, persons should use a tissue, handkerchief or sleeve—not their bare hand — to cover their mouth and nose.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Keep a distance from others.

- If possible, stay home from work, school and errands when ill to help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Wash hands often.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth since germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

"By working with health care providers the department wants to assure to the extent possible that persons at high risk of complications from influenza receive influenza vaccine," Dr. Williamson said.

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

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