



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## ADPH announces plan to provide influenza vaccinations for those at risk

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health will distribute the limited supply of influenza vaccine it has received to county health departments on Monday, Oct. 25, based upon need. The 60,620 doses of influenza vaccine will only be provided to high-risk individuals.

Each county health department will be sent a minimum of 100 doses. To avoid inconvenience, persons in high-risk groups will be given immunizations according to the first letter of their last names. The schedule is as follows:

**A-D**, Tuesday, Oct. 26

**E-J**, Wednesday, Oct. 27

**K-R**, Thursday, Oct. 28

**S-Z**, Friday, Oct. 29

A health department telephone survey found that health care providers in Alabama have received less than one-fourth, about 290,000, of the 1.2 million doses ordered for this flu season. The department also has received 39,000 doses of influenza vaccine for the Vaccines For Children program that will be distributed to health care providers. This represents 34 percent of the health department order for children in the program.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has notified the department manufacturers will provide influenza vaccine directly to nursing homes.

The departments of health in Jefferson and Mobile counties are establishing different procedures to address the high demands they may have for influenza vaccine.

Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said, "Despite our vaccine shortfall, we want as many high-risk individuals as possible to be able to receive influenza vaccine. Our objective is to distribute vaccine equitably and provide immunizations in as orderly a fashion as possible. No appointments are being made, so there is no need to call to schedule them.

A first ever massive telephone survey of medical providers statewide was made this week to determine vaccine availability and need. Calls were made to physicians, pharmacies, hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities to determine the number of vaccine doses needed for high-risk patients.

"We thank the Alabama health care community for their cooperation in responding to this survey and support by only vaccinating high-risk individuals," Dr. Williamson said.

Healthy adults have been asked to forgo receiving their influenza shots

so that people 65 and older and other people at high-risk of flu complications can be immunized. Vaccine will be provided for babies and toddlers ages 6-23 months; people 65 or older; persons 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.

Although a vaccination is the best protection against the flu, other precautions can be taken to prevent the transmission of influenza, including the following:

To stay healthy:

- \* Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- \* Wash hands well and often with soap and water.
- \* Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water is not available.
- \* Keep hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth so that germs don't have a way in.
- \* Remind others about protective actions they can take.

If sick, don't spread germs to others.

- \* Cover mouth and nose with a tissue during and after sneezing and coughing.
- \* Put tissues into the trash.
- \* Wash hands with soap and water.
- \* Stay home.

High-risk patients depend on flu shots because the injections are made of killed influenza virus. Other options include the inhaled flu vaccine which helps protect healthy children and adults, aged 5 to 49, from the flu. Oral treatments protect against infection if taken during an outbreak.

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