



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Health Department encourages influenza immunization

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County health departments in Alabama will begin administering influenza vaccine in clinics for high-risk individuals starting the first week in October and for all others beginning Nov. 1 through the end of influenza season.

More than 45 percent of flu vaccine ordered for county health departments has already been received and additional shipments are expected later. Manufacturers expected to provide inactivated influenza vaccine to the U.S. population this season are sanofi pasteur, Inc.; Chiron Corporation; and GlaxoSmithKline, Inc.

"Flu vaccine is the best way to prevent infection from the flu virus and the complications associated with flu," said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. "Persons must be re-vaccinated each year because the flu viruses change every year." The components of the vaccine for the 2005-06 influenza year include A/ New Caledonia (H1N1), A/California (H3N2) and B/Shanghai antigens.

The demand for influenza vaccine has increased in Alabama as well as the United States in recent years as vaccine shortages have drawn attention to the need for influenza vaccinations. However, immunization rates for influenza remain low, and illness and death from the disease remain high. Most people who die from influenza are 65 years old and older. Children younger than 2 years old are as likely to be hospitalized as those 65 and above.

Persons 65 years of age and older, regardless of health status, are targeted to receive influenza vaccine in October. Others at high risk who should be immunized during October are as follows:

- \* residents of long-term care facilities
- \* people with chronic health conditions
- \* children aged 6 - 23 months
- \* pregnant women
- \* health-care personnel who provide direct patient care
- \* household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age

Beginning Nov. 1 county health departments will administer vaccine to anyone, regardless of risk status, who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill from influenza.

Influenza vaccine may be taken until the end of the influenza season in March, while supplies last. Contact your health care provider or county health department for more information.

An updated schedule of influenza clinics to be held in county health departments can be accessed on the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at [www.adph.org/immunization](http://www.adph.org/immunization), or by calling your county health department.

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