

February 1, 2018

## DOH-PINELLAS REMINDS RESIDENTS THERE'S STILL TIME TO GET VACCINATED

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Flu season is well upon us and the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County (DOH-Pinellas) wants to remind residents that there's still time to receive your flu shot to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu.

DOH-Pinellas is seeing higher flu activity this year than last year, however, flu activity remains widespread and consistently increasing in Pinellas County as well as the state. This flu season is especially affecting individuals 65 years and older, followed by those 50-64 years old. This is different than past seasons that typically see children 0-4 years old as the second most adversely affected age group.

"Around this time every year we see an increase in influenza cases and we are seeing a higher number reported compared to previous years," states JoAnne Lamb, DOH-Pinellas Epidemiology Program Manager. "We are hopeful people will take this season as a reminder of how important it is to receive your flu shot," says Lamb. "The earlier in the season, the better, but if you haven't received it yet, there is still time."

Not only does getting your annual flu vaccine protect you, it protects those closest to you who may not be able to receive the vaccine (infants and those with compromised immune systems). The flu vaccine is safe and recommended for everyone six months and older, including pregnant women.

DOH-Pinellas also recommends that sick people stay home/keep children home until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication). If you become ill with flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider. Your health care provider can prescribe antiviral treatment if appropriate. Treatment is most effective within 48 hours, so calling as soon as you become ill is important.

It is essential to practice good hygiene by properly washing your hands often to help prevent the spread of seasonal flu. Make a habit to clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces in your home, school or office. Take additional steps to ward off the flu by coughing or sneezing into a tissue or elbow and avoid touching your face.

Last year, the flu season peaked around early February, however, peak season for the flu varies each year. There are still weeks of flu activity to come which means don't wait for flu to find you; get vaccinated now to protect yourself for the rest of the flu season.

DOH-Pinellas offers flu shots to adults for a fee at any of our five main clinics. Eligible children ages 0-18 may receive them at no cost through the Vaccines For Children program. For other flu shot locations, visit [www.floridahealth.gov/findaflushot](http://www.floridahealth.gov/findaflushot).

For more information on flu, go to [www.FluFreeFlorida.com](http://www.FluFreeFlorida.com).

For more information about DOH-Pinellas, go to [www.PinellasHealth.com](http://www.PinellasHealth.com) or follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyPinellas](https://twitter.com/HealthyPinellas).

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