



Pat Quinn, Governor
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Illinois Department on Aging Reminds Seniors to get Flu Shots in Observance of Healthy Aging Month

Seniors at risk for complications of flu

SPRINGFIELD — September is Healthy Aging Month and the Illinois Department on Aging Director Charles D. Johnson is urging older adults to get flu shots to protect themselves. The season for flu, formally called influenza, starts in the fall and runs through spring. Among people at increased risk for the flu are older adults including those who have certain chronic health conditions.

“People ages 50 and older should arm themselves for the upcoming flu season by getting a flu shot. Public health officials recommend that getting the seasonal flu shot is the best way to protect yourselves and your family from the flu, especially older adults who are considered at risk from complications of the flu,” said Director Johnson. “This flu season is expected to be worse because the H1N1 flu will be circulating at the same time as the seasonal flu, so people should also check with their health care provider for the availability of the H1N1 vaccine.”

As much as 20 percent of people nationwide get the (seasonal) flu each year. About 200,000 people experience complications from the flu and have to be hospitalized. And about 36,000 die each year from the flu. Flu symptoms include fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.

The flu is spread through coughing or sneezing. In addition to getting a flu shot, people are also encouraged to use good sanitary measures, such as covering the mouth and nose when coughing/sneezing, washing hands and staying away from others when sick.

The seasonal flu shot does not protect against H1N1. A vaccine for the H1N1 flu, which is separate from the seasonal flu vaccine, should be available in mid-October. The H1N1 vaccine is intended to be used in addition to the seasonal flu vaccine. Information about seasonal flu and H1N1 is available at www.ready.illinois.gov and www.flu.gov.

For more information about program services to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, call the Department on Aging Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966 or for TTY (hearing impaired use only) call 1-888-206-1327.

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