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PRESS RELEASE

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State Aging Department Urges Seniors to Get Flu Shots in Observance of Healthy Aging Month

One vaccine will protect against all strains of flu this season

SPRINGFIELD – September 14, 2011. In observance of September as Healthy Aging Month, the Illinois Department on Aging is urging seniors to prepare themselves for the upcoming flu season by getting their flu shot. Seniors are at increased risk for the flu, especially those who have certain chronic health conditions, so they should make getting a flu vaccine a priority.

“The best defense against the upcoming flu season is to get a flu shot,” said Michael Gelder, acting director of the Illinois Department on Aging. “Seniors should also talk with their health care provider about getting a pneumococcal vaccine.”

The flu season usually starts in the fall and runs through spring. So, this is a good time to get a vaccine. Just like last year, only one vaccine is needed. Public health officials strongly recommend getting vaccinated each year, because the flu season changes and effectiveness of the previous year’s vaccination decreases.

The flu vaccine has started to arrive in Illinois, and will be available at local health departments across the state, as well as some doctor’s offices, health clinics, hospitals and pharmacies. The cost of vaccine may vary, but is covered by Medicare, Medicaid and by some insurance companies.

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

For more information about program services to assist older adults in Illinois and their caregivers, visit www.state.il.us/aging or 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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