



November 18, 2010

Flu Free Healthy Holidays

Protect your family by getting vaccinated

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Millions of people travel every year during the holiday season to spend time with friends and family. To help stay healthy this holiday season, the Illinois Department of Public Health is encouraging everyone six months and older to get a flu shot.

“Every influenza season is different and people are affected by the flu differently. Even healthy children and adults can become very sick from influenza,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Damon T. Arnold. “There are some people who cannot be vaccinated, such as babies younger than six months and those who are allergic to the vaccine. That’s why it is important for those of us who can get our influenza vaccine, to do so and protect those vulnerable populations who could become seriously ill.”

Influenza is spread mainly through person-to-person contact when an infected person does not properly cover a cough or sneeze. Holiday travel and gatherings increase the opportunity for person-to-person contact, making it an ideal time for illness to spread.

The vaccine is available in two forms, a flu shot or nasal spray. Neither form of the vaccine will cause influenza.

The vaccine is available at local health departments as well as some doctor’s offices, health clinics, hospitals and pharmacies. The cost of vaccine will vary by location, but it is covered by Medicare, Medicaid and by some insurance companies.

Along with the vaccine, washing your hands is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting influenza or other viruses, like norovirus. Wash your hands with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.

For more information, log onto www.idph.state.il.us/flu/index.htm.