



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

Dougherty County Health Department

1710 South Slappey Boulevard

Albany, Georgia 31706

(229) 430-6200 Fax (229) 430-6256 Emergency 888-430-4590

www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org

December 9, 2008

For Immediate Release

Contact: Carolyn Maschke, Public Information Officer

229-430-1969, 229-357-0257; cwmaschke@dhr.state.ga.us

Avoid getting or giving the flu during the holidays by getting vaccinated now

Something nobody wants to receive during the holidays is a case of influenza, says Dougherty County Health Department Director Cheryl Henley, who adds that it isn't too late to get a flu shot.

"During this time of year, as people are traveling to visit relatives and friends and getting together at events to celebrate the season, germs have an opportunity to hitchhike from person-to-person," Henley said. "But the last thing anybody wants to get – or give for that matter – is the flu. That's why Public Health is reminding people during National Influenza Vaccine Week to get a flu shot if you haven't done so. It's not too late to get protected."

Influenza is a serious contagious disease, she said. Each year in the United States, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized with influenza. Flu and flu complications on average kill roughly 36,000 Americans annually.

"Georgia Public Health Laboratory today announced the season's first lab-confirmed flu case in Georgia," said Southwest Health District epidemiologist Jacqueline Jenkins, adding that the patient was in Thomasville. "Our most recent national data shows a low level of flu activity so far," she said.

But it is early in the season, Henley noted. "February is traditionally the peak season for flu," she said. "We will continue to urge people to get vaccinated throughout December and January."

Henley said it takes about two weeks after receiving the shot before it becomes fully effective. "But if you catch the flu during that two-week window, your case will be milder than it would be without a vaccination," she said. Flu shots are recommended for:

- Children aged 6 months up to 19 years old
- Pregnant women
- Adults 50 and older
- People with chronic medical conditions
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu

"If you have questions about whether you or your loved one should get a flu shot, check with your healthcare provider," Henley said. "Information about seasonal flu is also available at Southwest Health District's web site, www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org, or from the Dougherty County Health Department.

###

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth