



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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County health departments' flu shot policies unchanged; no prescription needed

Flu shots will be available as usual at the 14 county health departments in Southwest Health District, without the necessity for patients to provide a prescription by their physician.

"It is business as usual for us," said Southwest Health District Health Director Dr. Jacqueline Grant. "One of Public Health's core services is to prevent diseases from spreading by vaccinating the public. County health departments have not required paperwork from patients' physicians to get flu shots in years past. Our policy is unchanged. On Oct. 1, we are kicking off our annual district-wide campaign encouraging adults and children to get vaccinated against seasonal influenza."

Since Public Health nurses work under physician protocols, the new ruling by the Georgia Board of Pharmacy requiring a prescription won't affect health departments.

There is ample flu vaccine available this year, added Grant. "We don't anticipate any shortages," she said. "Also, this year's flu vaccine contains three new influenza virus strains."

Each year, researchers formulate vaccine based on the three major flu strains expected to cause the most illness during the flu season. Usually their predictions are accurate and the vaccine is a good match, Grant said. "Last year, it wasn't as good as hoped, so we had a worse than usual flu season."

The new vaccine provides protection from two A/Brisbane viruses and one B Florida virus. "It can help you avoid getting sick from these three viruses, or make your illness milder if you get a related but different strain of flu virus," she said. "You cannot catch the flu from getting a flu shot. But if you are exposed to the flu before immunity from the vaccination kicks in, you can catch it. It takes about two weeks to build immunity."

Anyone who wants to reduce the chance of catching the flu can get vaccinated. But certain populations face greater risk of developing serious complications from influenza and Public Health experts recommend they be vaccinated. They include:

- Children aged 6 months to 19 years
- Pregnant women
- People 50 and older
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions like asthma or heart disease
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Healthcare workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu

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

- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (children too young to be vaccinated)

Those who should talk to their doctor before getting a flu shot include anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to eggs or a previous flu shot, a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome or is running a fever, Grant added.

She said that influenza usually starts suddenly and may include fever (usually high), cough, sore throat, headache, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose and body aches. Diarrhea and vomiting may also occur and are usually more common in children than adults.

For more information about flu shots, contact your local county health department or go online to www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org, go to the “Home” button on the pulldown menu at the top of the page and click on “Prevention.”

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