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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN SANTA ROSA COUNTY ENCOURAGES VACCINATION AS FLU SEASON INTENSIFIES



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MILTON, Fla.— With an increase in cases of influenza-like illnesses (ILI) in our area, the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County (DOH-Santa Rosa) encourages everyone to protect themselves and their families from the flu by getting vaccinated. According to reports from the Emergency Department at Santa Rosa Medical Center, 2.8% of the ED visits between December 1 and December 25 were due to ILI. However, reports for December 26, 27, and 28 show visits due to ILI increased to 7.4%, 10.6% and 10.8% respectively.

It is never too late to get a flu shot. While many cases of the flu are mild with symptoms that include fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, tiredness, vomiting and diarrhea, some cases can become life-threatening and can even lead to death. Those most at risk of serious complications are children under the age of 5, adults 65 and older, and people with compromised immune systems caused by chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS, asthma, heart disease, and diabetes. Pregnant women, or women planning to become pregnant, are also strongly advised to get their flu vaccine.

The annual flu vaccine is safe and is the easiest and most effective way to protect yourself, your family and your community from the flu. The vaccine is recommended for everyone over the age of six months. It takes about two weeks for the body to develop immunity against the flu.

In addition to the vaccine, you can reduce your risk of getting the flu by following these precautions:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue, then throw the tissue away, or cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve. Avoid touching your face.
- If you do become ill with flu-like symptoms, stay home until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever reducing medicine, and keep children home from school or day care if they are sick.

The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County offers the flu vaccine by appointment during regular clinic hours for a \$30.00 fee. A limited supply of free vaccine is available for

children 6 months through 18 years of age through the Vaccines for Children program; however, supplies of the free vaccine are limited, so parents are encouraged to inquire about vaccine availability when scheduling an appointment for a child. To schedule an appointment, call 850-983-5200.

The flu vaccine is also offered in many other convenient locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, retail stores, pharmacies, health centers and by many employers and schools. Visit the Florida Department of Health's flu shot locator page at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/flu-prevention/locate-a-flu-shot.html> to search for a flu vaccine location near you.

For further information regarding influenza, visit the Florida Department of Health website at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/prevention/flu-prevention/index.html> or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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