



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Health Department encourages influenza immunization

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County health departments in Alabama have begun administering influenza vaccine in special clinics being held from October through the end of influenza season in Alabama.

"Although the current influenza vaccine can contain one or more of the antigens administered in previous years, annual vaccination with the current vaccine is necessary because immunity declines in the year following vaccination," said Mike Hudgens, Adult Immunization coordinator of the Immunization Division, Alabama Department of Public Health. The components of the vaccine for the 2003-2004 influenza year are A/Panama, A New Caledonia and B/Hong Kong.

Even though the use of influenza vaccine has increased in Alabama as well as the United States in recent years, immunization rates for influenza remain low, and illness and death from the disease remain high. On average, 114,000 people are hospitalized and approximately 36,000 people die each year in the United States from complications associated with influenza. It is important to note that most people who die are 65 years old and older. However, children younger than 2 years old are as likely to be hospitalized as those 65 and above.

Persons 65 years of age and older, regardless of health status, are among the groups targeted to receive influenza vaccine. Others who should be immunized during October are as follows:

- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities that house persons of any age with chronic medical conditions
- Adults and children 6 months of age and older with chronic disorders of the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems (including children with asthma)
- Adults and children 6 months of age and older who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization last year because of chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes)
- Persons with kidney dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies or immunosuppression (including immune system problems caused by medicine or by infection with human immunodeficiency virus, HIV/AIDS)
- Children and teenagers (6 months to 18 years of age) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season

- Persons who can transmit influenza to those at risk including physicians, nurses, employees of hospitals, outpatient care centers, nursing homes and chronic care facilities; and providers of home care to persons at risk and household members of persons in high risk groups

County health departments are also administering vaccine to persons who wish to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill from influenza and are not in one of the high-risk categories. Annual vaccination against influenza is also recommended for all persons 50 and older, and vaccination is encouraged for healthy children aged 6-23 months to reduce their risk of influenza-related hospitalization. Persons in these groups are especially encouraged to receive influenza immunizations.

Influenza vaccine may be taken until the end of the influenza season in March, while supplies last. A schedule of influenza clinics to be held in county health departments can be accessed on the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at [www.adph.org/immunization](http://www.adph.org/immunization), or by calling the Immunization Division at (334) 206-5023 or 1-800-469-4599. For more information about influenza, contact your local county health department or personal physician.

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