

It's not too late to be immunized for influenza

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Winkler Sims
334-206-5023

While supplies of influenza vaccine are reaching low levels, there is not yet a shortage of vaccine in the state.

"While we have administered thousands of doses of influenza vaccine this year, most county health departments still have some vaccine available," said Winkler Sims, director of the Immunization Division. "December is not too late for Alabamians to be immunized, because influenza season usually peaks in January or February here as it does nationally."

Influenza vaccine can be taken through the end of March.

Several groups of people should obtain flu shots because they are at high risk of complications, such as pneumonia or even death. These groups include persons 50 years old or older; residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house persons of any age who have long-term illnesses; adults and children who have chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma; adults and children who need regular medical care or have been in a hospital because of diseases like diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system; women who will be more than 3 months pregnant during the flu season, children 6-23 months of age and household contacts of high risk people.

Influenza is caused by a virus. In an average year, 20 percent of the population experiences influenza. Symptoms include the sudden onset of fever, cough, headache, body aches, mild sore throat and stuffy nose. Severe symptoms last 2-7 days, but the cough can last for weeks. Some patients become so sick that they need hospitalization and some even die.

For more information about the availability of influenza vaccine, contact your local county health department or health care provider.

12/08/03