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Press Release

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Stay healthy this flu season by getting a flu shot.

Seasonal influenza, or flu, is a contagious respiratory illness that can cause mild to severe illness. The Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and Cook County Health & Hospitals System (CCHHS) recommend everyone six months of age and older receive a flu shot.

“Residents should contact their healthcare provider or visit their local pharmacy to get a flu shot,” said CCDPH COO Dr. Terry Mason. “A flu shot or nasal-spray flu vaccine is the most effective way to protect against the flu virus and now is the best time to get it to be protected the entire season which typically runs through May.”

Flu is a virus that affects the respiratory system and is spread primarily when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms of the flu virus include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. While the flu can be particularly dangerous to the elderly or people with chronic illness who can't fight the debilitating effects of the virus, anyone can get the flu.

“Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently,” said Dr. Sharon Welbel, CCHHS Director of Hospital Epidemiology and Infectious Control. “While much of the attention has been on Ebola and Enterovirus D68, influenza is a serious disease that will affect more people and can range from mild to life-threatening.”

In addition to getting vaccinated, residents should practice the three C's to limit the spread of any illness.

- **Clean** – properly wash your hands frequently
- **Cover** – cover your cough and sneeze
- **Contain** – contain your germs by staying home if you are sick

The 2014-2015 flu vaccine will protect against three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during this season: influenza A (H1N1) virus, influenza A (H3N2) virus and influenza B virus.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), seven influenza vaccine manufacturers projected that as many as 151 million to 159 million doses of influenza vaccine will be available for use in the United States during the 2014-2015 influenza season.

While some companies have experienced early season shipping delays, manufacturers anticipate the majority of their flu vaccines will be distributed by the end of October, according to the CDC. While this is slightly later than vaccine was shipped last year, it is not an unusual pattern for seasonal flu vaccine distribution overall.

The Cook County Health & Hospitals System provides flu shots at its hospitals and health centers. For a full list of CCHHS health centers, please visit www.cookcountyhhs.org.

Vaccine is available at your local pharmacy, family doctor and grocery stores throughout suburban Cook County. For more information on influenza or to use the vaccine finder, please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org/flu.

Watch for CCDPH seasonal influenza updates on [facebook/ccdph](https://www.facebook.com/ccdph) and [twitter/@cookcohealth](https://twitter.com/cookcohealth).

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