



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

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HEALTH COMMISSIONER RECEIVES FLU VACCINATION, STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE TO PREVENT FLU

State Health Department Launches Flu Information Line

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN today reiterated the importance for everyone who can to get vaccinated to prevent the flu. Cooper demonstrated the simplicity of the process by receiving her own seasonal flu vaccine.

“This year, it is particularly important for people to receive the vaccines – both seasonal and H1N1 – to prevent the flu since both strains will be circulating this fall and winter,” said Cooper. “In addition to covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands regularly and staying home when sick, vaccination offers the best possible protection. It is proven to lessen the severity of flu symptoms.”

Each year, more than 200,000 people in the United States are hospitalized with flu complications and about 36,000 people die because of the flu. Approximately 700 of the deaths occur here in Tennessee. With the current flu pandemic, state health officials anticipate Tennessee could see cases of illness from H1N1 flu as well as seasonal flu for the next several months.

“The flu can have a devastating impact on some, like pregnant women, the very young and the elderly,” said State Epidemiologist Tim F. Jones. “It is particularly important that people like these as well as those who care for them get flu vaccine.”

Immunization against influenza can be administered in the form of an injection or nasal spray. Your health provider can explain guidelines for each type of vaccine. Supplies of seasonal flu vaccine are available now at county health departments, health care providers’ offices, pharmacies and grocery stores across the state.

The Tennessee Department of Health strongly encourages high risk people, those who live with them, and all health care providers to get vaccinated every year. Those considered high risk for contracting the flu or experiencing its complications include:

- pregnant women;
- everyone age 50 or older;
- children age 6 months to 18 years;
- anyone with a chronic medical condition such as diabetes, lung or heart disease; and
- residents of long-term care facilities.

– more –

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The Tennessee Department of Health is also responsible for distribution of the H1N1 vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems receive the H1N1 vaccine as soon as it becomes available.

The Department is encouraging health professionals, school officials or other organizations with an interest in administering the vaccine or receiving related information to visit the Web site at <http://health.state.tn.us/twis/>.

The Tennessee Department of Health has launched a toll-free Flu Information Line equipped to answer questions related to H1N1 and seasonal flu as well as provide general information. The number is 1-877-252-3432. People are encouraged to call between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., Central time. The Tennessee Department of Health Web site also is a great source for information about flu and how to protect from getting the illness. The site is www.tn.gov/health.

“We know parents, employers and many others may have questions or need information concerning flu-related issues, so we have established the Flu Information Line to help equip people with what they need to know to prevent the flu,” said Cooper.

For more information about the flu, visit the Department of Health Web site at www.tn.gov/health or go to the federal Web site link www.flu.gov.

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