



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D., DIRECTOR
Phone: (808) 586-4410
Fax: (808) 586-4444

For Immediate Release: October 26, 2004

04-81

HAWAII'S FLU VACCINE STATUS

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health has determined, based on preliminary estimates, that Hawaii's health care providers have received approximately 230,000 doses of flu vaccine this year. Many of these doses were received prior to the shortage announcement and subsequent recommendations so that it is unclear how much of this supply remains. The Department continues to strongly urge all physicians to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and vaccinate **only those at highest risk** for complications from the flu.

"While not everyone in Hawaii at high risk for complications of flu may be able to receive their flu shot this year, it is encouraging to know that Hawaii may have sufficient flu vaccine to protect many of those who are most vulnerable to complications from the flu if everyone follows the CDC guidelines. The Department of Health will continue to work with physicians statewide to emphasize the message that flu vaccine should be used **only for those at highest risk of flu complications**," said Linda Rosen, M.D., Deputy Director of Health.

The DOH continues to **strongly urge** physicians who have privately purchased vaccine, to follow the CDC recommendations on who should receive the flu vaccine. The vaccine should only be administered to those vulnerable individuals in high-risk groups. Individuals who fall into one of the high-risk groups should contact their health care provider to receive a flu shot. High-risk groups are:

- Children 6-23 months
- Adults 65 years and older
- Chronically ill
- Pregnant women

The DOH is working closely with the key physician groups, health care and long-term care agencies, and pharmacies to look for ways to redistribute any unused vaccine. Private physicians have been alerted to work

with colleagues to redistribute unused flu vaccine, so those in high-risk groups can get immunized, or to contact the DOH.

“We really appreciate that those physicians with extra vaccine, originally intended for their healthy patients, are making it available to other physicians’ patients that fall into the high risk groups, “ said Linda Rosen, M.D., Deputy Health Director.

The DOH in collaboration with HMSA has a limited pool of about 6,000 doses of flu vaccine. This vaccine will be distributed as early as mid-November for chronically ill children, adults and elderly not able to get a flu shot from their doctor. Limited clinics are being planned statewide. Clinic appointments will be arranged through physician offices for those patients in the highest risk chronically ill category. The public is advised to call 2-1-1 after November 1, 2004 to find out details.

Health care workers, caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months old are recommended to receive the nasal flu vaccine, FluMist®. FluMist® recipients must be healthy, between the ages of 5-49 years of age, and should not be caring for the severely immunocompromised. If you are interested in receiving FluMist®, please call 2-1-1 for information.

While vaccination is the best protection against the flu, there are other ways to protect yourself and your family:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Touching something contaminated with germs (doorknob, phone or faucet) and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth can spread infection.
- Seek care early. See your doctor immediately if you develop flu symptoms.

For additional information on flu and the availability of flu vaccine, call 2-1-1.

###

For more information contact:

Laura Lott
Communications Office
Phone: 586-4442

Judy Strait-Jones
Hawaii Immunization Branch
Phone: 586-8321