



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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GOVERNOR

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FLU PREVENTION DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) vaccinated almost 12,000 chronically ill individuals at public flu clinics across the state and delivered over 2,600 doses of vaccine to individuals living in an institutional setting, since mid-November.

“While it appears the demand for flu vaccine has gone down, we know there are still individuals out there in the community who need to be vaccinated,” said Chiyome Fukino, M.D., Director, Hawaii State Department of Health. “If you are in one of the high risk groups, you need to call your doctor or 211 if you don’t have a doctor.”

Those at higher risk of severe complication from the influenza include:

- Those 65 years or older
- Individuals with chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, asthma, cancer, HIV/AIDS, or other long term health problems
- Women who are at least 3 months pregnant during the flu season
- Young children ages 6 to 23 months

“If their doctor does not have flu vaccine, ask for a referral to another doctor who does,” said Fukino. “Check with all your doctors – specialists and even doctor’s of other family members - be persistent.”

(more)

Over the last several weeks, private physicians have had an opportunity to purchase additional flu vaccine to service their high-risk patients. More than 19,000 doses have been ordered through this state and federally organized program. DOH continues to assist physicians to redistribute vaccine between physicians who have extra flu vaccine and those who need additional doses to meet the demand from their high-risk patients. Additional vaccine, obtained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from foreign manufacturers, may be available for purchase in January depending on CDC distribution plans.

The flu season traditionally peaks after the holidays. Some healthcare professionals say that the busy holiday party circuit contributes to the increase respiratory cases seen in early January. They suggest that you practice good respiratory etiquette to protect your family, including:

- Staying home if your sick -- away from others that could become infected
- Covering you mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water
- Avoid touching your eyes nose or mouth
- Boost immune system by getting lots of rest, eating healthy and limiting alcohol intake

“Although it is the season of giving, we’d rather not see people sharing a cold or flu,” said Sarah Park, M.D., Hawaii State Department of Health. “It’s ok to stay away from the big holiday gathering if you are sick. It may be the best present you can give your family -- continued good health.”

For more information about flu, call the Department of Health at 586-8300 on Oahu or 1-800-933-4832 from a Neighbor Island or visit www.hawaii.gov/health.

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