



## DOUGLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Douglas County Health Department Recommends Flu Shots for High Risk Individuals

OMAHA, NEBRASKA – Annual influenza season is approaching and flu shots are being offered in Douglas County. Until October 24, flu shots will be prioritized for people at highest risk of complications, including babies and the elderly, pregnant women, and children and adults with chronic medical conditions as well as health care workers.

“A flu shot is an excellent way to protect the health of our community and keep those most at risk of influenza complications out of harm’s way,” says Adi Pour, Director of the Douglas County Health Department.

A lot of attention has been given lately to pandemic influenza/avian influenza (bird flu) and its potential impact on human health, however, every year in the United States, there are 36,000 influenza related deaths and around 200,000 hospitalizations due to seasonal influenza related complications. “Getting a flu shot is the best protection. It protects people by reducing the risk of getting the flu and reducing its severity, and flu shots also protect those who cannot get immunized, such as infants,” according to Dr. Pour.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that only the following priority groups receive the influenza vaccine through October 24, 2005:

- Persons aged 65 years or older with or without chronic medical conditions, such as heart or lung disease, kidney disease, or diabetes
- All children 6-23 months of age
- Nursing home residents
- Health care workers
- Persons aged 2-64 years with chronic medical conditions
- Pregnant women
- Household contacts of children less than 6 months of age

Beginning October 24, 2005, all persons will be eligible for a flu shot.

Vaccine availability is not expected to be a problem this year. The CDC estimates that 71 million doses will be available. Another 3 million doses of FluMist, a vaccine delivered via nasal spray are expected to be available, though it is approved only for healthy people between the ages of 5 and 49.

**Protect yourself; protect your loved ones; get your flu shot!**

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