



For Immediate Release

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Get your seasonal flu shot and plan for your H1N1 vaccination when available

Galveston County and Cities – The Galveston County Health District (GCHD) annually encourages residents to get a flu shot. This year GCHD is recommending doing the same and telling people the earlier they can get their seasonal flu shot the better.

H1N1, the virus also known as swine flu, has generated most of the headlines this flu season, but there will not be a vaccination for it available until a later date to be announced. In the meantime, there is a vaccine available for seasonal flu at several locations in the county including the Health District.

“Do not wait. Get your seasonal flu vaccination now,” said Dr. Mark Guidry, GCHD CEO, and Galveston County Health Authority. “It is one of the best ways to protect yourself and others from seasonal flu. Some people may be thinking, I’ll just wait for the H1N1 vaccine and get them at the same time. You should not wait.”

Influenza is not just a winter inconvenience, but a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to complications, hospitalization, and even death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu shot each year.

This year, with H1N1 vaccinations coming later people are being urged to get their seasonal flu shot as early as possible. Health District officials point out that one vaccine is not a substitute for the other and people, particularly those in the high risk groups, should plan on getting both.

Anyone can receive a seasonal flu shot who wants to reduce the likelihood of becoming infected. Due to the risk of serious consequences, high risk groups are strongly advised to receive flu shots every year. High risk groups for seasonal flu include children aged 6 months to 18 years old; pregnant women; people 50 years of age and older; anyone with a chronic medical condition such as asthma or diabetes; and people who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities. It is also recommended for health care workers and people who live with anyone in the high risk groups.

"Basically, you say the very young and the very old and those that care for them when it comes to seasonal flu," Guidry said. "And people who have severe or chronic health problems."

The health district expects a supply of 3000 doses to be available to the public, which will be given while supplies last. Flu shots are \$20 each. Clinic staff will review Medicare cards for reimbursement at no cost to senior citizens. Pneumonia vaccinations will also be available at a cost of \$30.

Seasonal flu shot clinics will be conducted at the following locations on the dates and times listed:

Monday, October 5th, 10 a.m. -12 p.m.: Nessler Center, 2010 5th Ave North, Texas City

Tuesday, October 6th, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Johnson Community Center (Carbide Park), 4102 FM 519, La Marque

Wednesday, October 7th, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Bacliff Community Center, 4503 11th Street, Bacliff

Thursday, October 8th, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.: Dickinson Community Center, 2714 Hwy 3, Dickinson

Friday, October 9th, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.: Senior Expo at Mall of the Mainland

In order to meet demand, seasonal flu vaccinations will also be given at GCHD Headquarters. Vaccinations will be given in the La Marque Office at 1207 Oak Street, Monday, October 12, through Friday, October 16th, 9 am to 12 pm, and 1 pm to 4 pm.

Starting October 19th, seasonal flu shots will still be available in GCHD immunization clinics located in Dickinson, Texas City and Galveston, as long as supplies last. Clinic times and locations can be found at www.gchd.org/chn/IMM.htm.

Dr. Guidry points out that while the single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, there are some other things a person can do to help prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu such as:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits like getting plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

A separate vaccine for H1N1 is in production, but it is not expected to be available until mid to late October. Priority groups for H1N1 vaccine differ from seasonal flu vaccine. For a list of the H1N1 priority groups see www.gchd.org. When H1N1 vaccine is available, additional public information will be distributed.

For more information about Galveston County Health District immunization clinics and vaccine supply call (409) 938-7221 or visit the District web site.

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(News Media: For more information contact Kurt Koopmann, GCHD Public Information Officer, 409-938-2211 or kkoopman@gchd.org)