DOH recommends flu vaccines for everyone 6 months and older

Staff Reports

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Health announced the first laboratory confirmed cases of flu of the 2018-2019 season Sept. 18. All three persons, ages 8, 11 and 13 years old, live in Quay County and reported no recent out of state travel.

“We encourage New Mexicans to get their seasonal flu vaccination – the sooner the better,” Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Lynn Gallagher said. “The exact timing and duration of flu season changes year-to-year, but flu activity often begins to heighten in October.

The DOH recommends everyone six months of age and older get the flu shot every year, especially people in the following groups. All of them are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or live with or care for people at high risk of developing flu-related complications:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Pregnant women (all trimesters), and up to two weeks post-partum
- People ages 65 years and older
- People of any age with medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, lung or heart disease, and those who are immunocompromised
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including healthcare personnel and caregivers of babies younger than six months
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives
- People who are morbidly obese

People in these groups should also consider seeing their healthcare provider as early as possible to be evaluated for antiviral medication if they develop flu symptoms because the sooner that these medications are begun, the better the chance of preventing serious complications. People who have the flu may have some or all of the following symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

Remember, to avoid catching the flu or passing it on to others, everyone should wash their hands frequently, cover their mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing, and stay home when ill.

Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including healthcare provider offices, pharmacies, hospitals, and public health offices (usually not until late October), as well in some worksites and schools.

NMDOH encourages those with health insurance to contact their healthcare provider or pharmacist about getting a flu vaccine. The department also offers vaccinations for people without insurance or who are otherwise not able to get vaccinated. Those with Medicaid or other insurance who go to public health offices are asked to bring their insurance card.

You can find more information about flu and flu vaccines at the Department of Health influenza website: www.nmhealth.org/about/phd/idb/imp/fluv/. Or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention information page: www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/current.htm.

