

## Get vaccinated against the flu

Written by Staff Report  
Thursday, 31 December 2015 04:50

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The New Mexico Department of Health reminds New Mexicans that it's not too late to get vaccinated against the flu. Colds and the flu tends to spread more during this time.

This past week, the New Mexico Department of Health has seen an increase in influenza-like illness activity, but influenza activity is likely to increase during upcoming months. With most of the flu season still to come, getting a flu vaccination now can still protect you from illness this season. Information to date shows that this season's vaccine is a good match to protect against the types of flu currently circulating in the United States, including New Mexico.

*"Getting a flu vaccination every year is the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from influenza," said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Retta Ward, MPH . "In addition to getting vaccinated, frequent hand washing helps protect against flu and other respiratory viruses. Also, remember to sneeze or cough into your upper sleeve or elbow, rather than into your hands."*

The Department of Health recommends that individuals talk with their healthcare provider or pharmacist about getting the flu vaccine. The Department 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.

Even if you think you already had the flu this season, it is recommended everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine. The flu vaccine protects against multiple strains of flu that may be circulating at any given time, and people can get infected with more than one type of flu during the season. The Department of Health also recommends that you ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you need the pneumococcal vaccine which can be given at the same time as flu vaccine. Influenza frequently causes types of pneumonia that can be prevented by the pneumococcal vaccine.

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People in high-risk groups and those who live with or care for high risk individuals are especially encouraged to get vaccinated against the flu. People in high-risk groups are at increased risk for having serious flu-related complications, such as hospitalization and death. People in these groups should also consider seeing their healthcare provider to be evaluated for antiviral medications if they develop flu symptoms. Flu symptoms may include rapid illness onset with fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and/or muscle aches.

Influenza vaccination is highly recommended for the following high risk groups:

- Pregnant women (any trimester) and up to two weeks post-partum
- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People age 65 and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, and lung or heart disease and those with immunosuppression from medication or disease
- 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 6 months
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives
- People who are morbidly obese

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***To find out more about flu vaccination clinics throughout New Mexico, you can call the Immunization Hotline toll free at 1-866-681-5872 or visit [www.nmhealth.org](http://www.nmhealth.org)***