



News from the Office of
ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

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BURSTEIN RECEIVES FLU VACCINATION, ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO DO SAME

Health Commissioner Demonstrates Simplicity of Process, Varieties of Vaccine Available

Recommends Vaccination for Seniors, Pregnant Women, Health Care Personnel

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein received her flu vaccination at the Buffalo Medical Group offices on High Street in Buffalo, while encouraging all residents to plan ahead and be ready for the upcoming flu season by getting vaccinations for themselves and those in their care as soon as possible. The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year.

“Getting vaccinated against the flu is the easiest and most effective way to protect yourself during this flu season and prevent a flu virus infection that can lead to a significant course of illness and missed days from work or school,” **said Burstein**. “Everyone who is at least six months of age should get a flu vaccination this season, and it is especially important for certain people to get vaccinated, including pregnant females, people age 65 and over, young children (especially those 2 years and younger), and those who have medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and chronic lung disease. Also, people who live with or care for individuals having these conditions should get vaccinated, as exposure to flu can have serious complications for individuals with these types of conditions.”

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently. Flu season in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May. During this time, flu viruses are circulating in the population. An annual seasonal flu vaccine, either the flu shot or the nasal spray vaccine, is the best way to reduce the chances of getting the seasonal flu and lessening the chances of spreading it to others. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop and provide protection against the flu. When more people are vaccinated, less flu will spread through a community as a whole.

A recent Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (“CDC”) report noted that routine influenza vaccination of health care personnel every influenza season can reduce influenza-related illness and its potentially serious consequences among health care personnel and their patients. Overall, 72% of all health care personnel studied had flu vaccinations in 2012-13, an increase from 67% vaccination coverage during the 2011-12 flu season. Workplace flu vaccination requirements were associated with higher vaccination coverage among health care personnel. Beginning this flu season, many health care offices and facilities in New York State will require all health care personnel to either receive a flu vaccine or wear a mask during flu season.

Burstein continued, “It is important that health care workers in all fields get flu vaccinations to protect themselves and their patients from getting the flu. Working in health care means coming in close contact with people who may be immune-compromised or have chronic conditions that may make them very ill

with an influenza infection. Limiting potential exposures to these groups is critical. Getting vaccinated will not only keep health care workers healthy and on the job during the flu season, it will also protect the people they care for from possibly getting infected with the flu during their visit.”

Multiple types of flu vaccines are available, including the traditional “flu shot”, an intradermal shot, and the nasal spray flu vaccine. The traditional flu shot is given with a needle, usually in the arm, and is approved for use in people older than six months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions. An intradermal flu shot, which is injected into the skin instead of the muscle and uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot, is approved for people ages 18 to 64 years. In addition, a high-dose flu shot is approved for people 65 years and older, an egg-free flu shot is approved for people 18 through 49 years that can be given to people with egg allergies, and a flu shot containing virus grown in cell culture is approved for people 18 years and older. The nasal spray vaccine is approved for healthy people ages 2 through 49 years, but not for pregnant females. Additionally, for the first time this year, some flu vaccines protect against four influenza strains (quadrivalent) rather than the usual three. These vaccines were developed based on international surveillance and scientists’ estimates about which strains of influenza virus may circulate this year. All of the nasal spray vaccines in the United States this year will be quadrivalent; individuals seeking a flu shot can ask their doctor or pharmacist if the quadrivalent vaccine is available. However, there is no recommendation of one version over the other at this time.

“Flu viruses are constantly changing, and it is not unusual for new viruses to appear each year. Vaccines are formulated to keep up with these changes from year to year, so even if someone was vaccinated last season, they should be sure to get another vaccination this season,” **Burstein added.** “This year, we have many more options for types of vaccines and options for protection against the flu have never been better. Vaccinations are quick and widely available, and the longer people wait to get vaccinated, the greater the chance that they will be exposed to influenza. Get vaccinated early - TODAY!”

For more information:

On the Erie County Department of Health, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health/>

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