



NEWS RELEASE

Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

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CONTACT: Peter Anderson / Peter.Anderson@erie.gov
Phone: (716)858-8500 / Mobile: (716) 270-7842

BURSTEIN URGES VACCINATION AS FLU SEASON APPROACHES

Health Commissioner Urges Parents, Caregivers to Protect Themselves and Others

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein urged parents and caregivers to plan ahead and be ready for the upcoming flu season by getting vaccinations for themselves and those in their care as soon as vaccine becomes available in their community. The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year.

“While the summer season is just drawing to a close, it is important to remember that colder weather and the flu season are on the way, and the time to act to protect ourselves is now,” **said Burstein.** “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. This year, we have many more options for types of vaccines and options for protection against the flu have never been better.”

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 also lessening the chances of spreading it to others. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu. When more people are vaccinated, less flu will spread through a community as a whole.

Burstein continued, “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 women, 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.”

Two types of vaccines are available, including the traditional “flu shot” and the nasal spray flu vaccine. The 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. There are three types of flu shot available: a regular flu shot approved for people ages 6 months and older, a high-dose flu shot approved for people ages 65 years and older, and an intradermal flu shot approved for people ages 18 to

64 years. The nasal spray vaccine is approved for healthy people ages 2 through 49 years, but not for pregnant women. Additionally, for the first time this year, some flu vaccines protect against four influenza viruses (quadrivalent) rather than the usual three viruses. These vaccines were developed based on international surveillance and scientists' estimates about which types and strains of influenza virus will circulate this year. All of the nasal spray vaccines available in the United States this year will be quadrivalent; however, if individuals prefer a flu shot, they 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.

"There is no reason to wait to protect ourselves and our families, and if more people act now there will be less flu circulating in our community in the coming months," **Burstein added.** "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/>

On Preventing Seasonal Flu, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/preventingflu.htm>

On Key Facts About Seasonal Flu, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>

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