

## **Flu Season 2013-14**

### **Oregon Public Health Division**

(Updated 1/3/14)

**Issue Description:** Influenza is caused by a virus spread person-to-person, through the air and on hard surfaces in droplets from sneezes and coughs. Illness from the flu can last for 10 days or more. Symptoms include sore throat, coughing, runny nose, congestion, fever, muscle aches and headache. For some people, the flu can be a very serious, even deadly disease, which could lead to secondary infections such as pneumonia. In Oregon, the influenza season is quickly ramping up and most cases are H1N1. **Every flu season is different, and influenza can affect people differently. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.**

#### **Talking Points:**

1. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent flu infection, and the best way to protect yourself and your community from illness. The CDC recommends **everyone aged 6 months and older should receive an annual influenza vaccination**. Children 6 months through 8 years may need two doses depending on previous flu vaccine history, so it is important to talk to your child's healthcare provider. A seasonal flu vaccination is especially important for people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, for healthcare workers, and for people living with or caring for babies six months and younger, or others who are unable to be vaccinated because of health reasons. The vaccine is available, but people may need to call their provider or pharmacies to locate vaccine near them.
2. Each year, scientists determine which flu strains are likely to cause the most disease in the coming flu season and include them in the flu vaccine. The 2013-14 trivalent seasonal flu shot protects against: H1N1, H3N2 and influenza B/ Massachusetts. A new quadrivalent vaccine includes those three strains as well as B/Brisbane. People who had a flu vaccination last year should also get vaccinated this year, since the flu strains that are circulating change over time. Flu vaccine is manufactured under strict federal standards and thoroughly tested before it is offered to the public. There is an intradermal influenza vaccine for people ages 18-64 that is injected into the skin instead of the muscle. It uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot. There is also a trivalent vaccine that is egg-free for people who suffer from egg allergies.
3. In addition to vaccination, these preventive measures can help stop flu and other diseases from circulating:
  - Cover your cough and sneeze.
  - Wash your hands often. Use soap and warm water.
  - Stay home when you're sick. Protect others at school and work by staying home at least 24-hours after your fever (100+ degrees) subsides (subsides without fever reducing medicines).
  - Take antiviral medications if prescribed.
  - Clean surfaces. Flu germs can live for hours on hard surfaces. Make sure your home and workspace are wiped down frequently, especially where children are playing.

4. Flu vaccine is available from health care providers, local health departments, and many pharmacies (for people 11 and older). Some pharmacies can also immunize children under 11 with a prescription. To locate a flu vaccine near you, visit [www.flu.oregon.gov](http://www.flu.oregon.gov) or call 1-800-SAFENET ([1-800-723-3638](tel:1-800-723-3638) or 211). For the latest in Oregon flu activity, read [FluBites](#).

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- As of Dec. 14, more than 800,000 people in Oregon (about 32 percent) have received flu vaccine, which is slightly more than this time last year. As of Jan. 1, there have been at least 179 influenza-related hospitalizations in Oregon's sentinel tri-county Portland-Metro area.
- Last season, 167 children died from influenza in the US; as of Dec. 21, there have been 4 reported pediatric deaths from the flu this season (2013-14).
- In 2012-13, there were 380,000 flu hospitalizations in the US. The most vulnerable populations are people age 65 and older, and children under age 5.
- The CDC reports that the components included in this season's vaccine match the strains that are now circulating. The vaccine can also decrease the severity of illness in those who do become ill, and may prevent hospitalization and death.
- Pharmacists can provide flu immunizations for people over age 11. Some pharmacists will also administer vaccines to children under 11 with a prescription. Most major pharmacies report that vaccine is available. People should call around to locate the flu vaccination site nearest to them.
- Given the resurgence of H1N1 this season, we expect that the same people who were at risk for flu complications during the 2009 pandemic will also be adversely impacted this flu season. This includes younger adults and children, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women. This season, most influenza hospitalizations have been among middle age and younger adults. Some hospitalizations have been severe, including ICU Admissions and death.