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CARING FOR NEW MEXICO

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Department of Health Reports First Case of Influenza in New Mexico

Influenza Vaccine Recommended for Everyone Older than Six Months

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health announced today the first laboratory-confirmed case of influenza in New Mexico. Influenza, commonly called the flu, was identified at the state’s Scientific Laboratory Division in a young child from McKinley County. The Department of Health is recommending that everyone older than six months get their flu vaccine to help prevent getting the flu. To further protect against the flu, everyone should wash their hands frequently, cover their mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing, and stay home when ill.

“Since the influenza season usually peaks between December and February in New Mexico, it is not too late to get vaccinated against the flu. I am advising all New Mexicans to get a flu shot to help prevent the spread of the disease,” said Department of Health Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Catherine Torres.

While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that people in the following groups get vaccinated, either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than five, but especially children younger than two years old
- People age 65 and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, and lung or heart disease
- People who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including health care workers and caregivers for babies younger than 6 months
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives, who last flu season seemed to be at higher risk of flu complications
- People who are morbidly obese

New Mexicans should contact their health care providers to receive flu vaccine. The Department of Health’s public health offices provide vaccines to people who are at high risk for serious illness or death and to people who have no health insurance. Public health offices are listed in the phonebook’s blue pages under state government. Contact information for public health offices is listed at www.nmhealth.org.



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Many of the people at high risk for flu complications should also get a pneumonia shot if they have never had one. People who need to have the pneumococcal vaccine are: age 65 and older, and adults 19 and older who smoke or have chronic health conditions, such as: asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular or lung disease, cirrhosis, chronic renal failure or who are immunocompromised due to lymphoma, organ transplant, multiple myeloma or Hodgkin's disease.

The Department of Health does not track every case of flu in New Mexico; they do track influenza-like illness at several locations around the state to estimate the amount of flu activity. Weekly flu reports can be found online at www.health.state.nm.us/flu/.

As the flu season progresses, you can find information about the flu and flu clinics by calling toll-free at 866-681-5872 or by visiting the Department of Health's website at <http://www.immunizenm.org/flu.shtml>. More clinics will be scheduled later in the season.

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