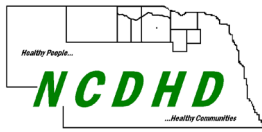


News Release



North Central District Health Department (NCDHD) represents the following counties;
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Children and Pregnant Women Recommended for Flu Vaccination

Flu season usually takes place from November through March, and this year will be no exception.

Pregnant women and healthy children between six and 23 months of age should get flu vaccinations, according to Dr. Richard Raymond, Chief Medical Officer with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. "We've always recommended that adults over 65 and those with chronic health conditions get the flu vaccine," Dr. Raymond said. "Now we're also recommending flu vaccine for women who are more than three months pregnant during flu season and for young children over six months of age."

Influenza is the number one vaccine-preventable cause of hospitalization and death in children under two years of age. Influenza vaccine can prevent up to 70 percent of hospitalizations and 85 percent of deaths from influenza-related pneumonia, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC).

Children are especially vulnerable to this highly contagious disease. Flu and its complications are the sixth leading cause of death nationally among children four years old and younger. Children under two years of age have one of the highest rates of hospitalizations due to complications from the flu, according to the CDC.

Raymond noted that children under six months of age are too young to develop an immune response and should not receive the flu vaccine. The best way for parents to protect their infants is to get immunized themselves.

"Getting a flu vaccination prevents flu-related death and severe illness, and protects you, your children, other family members and caregivers," Raymond said. "October and November are the best times to get immunized, but it's not too late in December or even later."

New CDC recommendations have also lowered the age for adults who should get an annual flu shot from 65 years of age to 50 years. Others who should be immunized include residents of long-term care facilities and health care workers.

North Central District Health Department urges you to talk with your family physician to find out if getting a flu shot is right for you.