

Kane County Health Department

1240 N. Highland Ave
Aurora, IL 60506
Phone (630) 299-4366
Fax (630) 299-4220



76 S. Grove Ave.
Elgin, IL 60120
Phone (847) 608-2850
Fax (847) 888-6458

KANE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 6, 2004

WEB SITE: www.kanehealth.com
Contact: Claire Dobbins
630-208-5152

FLU VACCINE RECOMMENDED FOR HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS *Healthy individuals asked to defer vaccination*

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Due to loss of about half of the vaccine supply to the United States, the Illinois Department of Public Health is recommending that health care providers use available supplies to vaccinate persons at high risk of complications from influenza and health care workers and caregivers who care for these persons.

British health authorities announced Tuesday that they have halted flu vaccine shipments by Chiron Corp., which was to produce between 46 to 48 million doses of influenza vaccine for the United States this flu season. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has announced that it is pursuing contingencies for this loss of supply.

“The flu is potentially serious and can even be deadly for the elderly and those at higher risk for medical complications,” said Dr. Eric E. Whitaker, state public health director. “For that reason, we are asking that healthy people defer or forego getting vaccinated in order to ensure that the supply reaches those that are most vulnerable.”

<<<MORE>>>

Those considered to be at high risk for complications include:

- Children ages 6 months to 23 months;
- Persons 65 years of age and older;
- Persons 2 to 64 years of age with underlying medical conditions;
- Pregnant women;
- Residents of long-term care facilities;
- Children ages 6 months to 18 years of age who are on long-term aspirin therapy;
- Health care workers providing direct patient care; and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age.

Health care workers and care-givers are encouraged to use a nasal mist known as FluMist, which can be given to healthy individuals 5 to 49 years of age. However, direct care workers who care for immunocompromised patients in special care units should not get this alternative protection.

It is anticipated that 54 million doses of influenza vaccine from Aventis and another 1.1 million of FluMist nasal spray will be available. DHHS had planned for a vaccine supply of about 100 million doses this season, after a demand of about 87 million doses last flu season.

The influenza vaccine is 70 to 90 percent effective in preventing influenza among healthy adults 65 years of age or younger and those who do get ill will typically experience milder symptoms. People who are allergic to eggs, who have an acute illness with fever or who have previously had onset of Guillain-Barre syndrome during the six weeks after receiving influenza vaccine should check with their physician before getting the vaccine.

Dr. Whitaker advised those who are at high risk and considering a flu shot to check with their health care provider, local health department or other community provider on the availability of flu vaccine. Private health care providers purchase and administer 90 percent of the vaccinations and their supply is unknown.

Early estimates indicate that the Department's vaccine order of 97,500 for the Vaccines For Children program will be reduced by at least one-third. Local health departments will continue to

<<<MORE>>>

receive vaccine for eligible high-risk children 0 to 18 years of age as part of this program, but their orders will also be reduced because of the shortage.

The flu season usually runs from November until April and often peaks between January and March. While October and November is the best time to be vaccinated, a flu shot can be given any time during the flu season.

Influenza, commonly called the flu, is caused by viruses that infect the respiratory tract and spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Flu symptoms include fever (usually 100 degrees F in adults and often higher in children), dry cough, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue.

After a person has been infected with the virus, symptoms usually appear within one to four days. The infection is considered contagious for up to five days after symptoms appear and illness usually lingers for a week or two. Each year, an estimated 10 percent to 20 percent of the population contracts influenza.

Even without being vaccinated, there are steps that can be taken to reduce transmission of flu:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water. Teach children the same healthy habit.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze, preferably with a facial tissue or your arm, not your hands. Promptly discard used facial tissues.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick.
- If you are sick with cough or fever, stay home from work or school until you recover.
- Contact your medical provider if you are experiencing severe symptoms that you believe require medical attention.
- Do not share things that go into the mouth, such as drinking cups, straws, etc.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (door knobs, refrigerator handle, phone, water faucets) if someone in your house has a cold or the flu.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

<<<MORE>>>

Those who develop flu-like symptoms should drink fluids, rest and stay home. Those who have the flu may also take over-the-counter drugs such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen, but aspirin should be avoided because taking it for some forms of flu has been associated with Reye's syndrome, a serious disease in children that can occur following a viral illness and that causes swelling of the brain.

"The Kane County Health Department is taking this situation very seriously," states Executive Director, Mary Lou England, RN "We are working regionally to bring in additional vaccine. In the meantime we urge people to allow those at highest risk to be vaccinated first and everyone should pay special attention to using good handwashing techniques."

####