



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

Department of Governmental Communications

*Lisa Dunham, Director
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County Health Department Offers Advice in Response to National Flu Vaccine Shortage

Healthy citizens are urged to forgo the vaccine this year

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nancy Duncan, Director, Division of Public Health
Julie Burkemper, Public Information Officer

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St. Charles County – In the wake of the recent announcement that nearly half of the nation’s expected doses of the influenza vaccine will be not available this flu season, the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is urging citizens to take simple precautions to prevent the spread of the flu virus and to help health practitioners and officials better ensure that the currently available doses get to citizens who need them most.

Based on the shortage, which occurred when the British government prohibited the Liverpool, England-based vaccine manufacturer, Chiron Corporation, from releasing nearly 50 million doses of flu vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has made interim recommendations for the 2004-2005 flu season.

Nancy Duncan, the Director of the Division of Public Health for the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment stated they are currently evaluating how much flu vaccine will be available to the health department.

“We do not normally provide the flu vaccine to the general public. Most of the vaccine we receive is transferred to county nursing homes for the use of their residents. It is crucial that we use our limited supplies to deliver the flu vaccine to those who are at the highest risk for complications from the flu,” Duncan said. Duncan stated that any additional vaccines available will be offered to other high risk individuals at a later date.

Priority groups for influenza vaccination have been identified and include:

- All children aged 6-23 months;
- Adults aged 65 years and older;
- Persons aged 2-64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions;
- All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;

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- Residents of nursing homes and long term care facilities;
- Children aged 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy;
- Health care workers providing direct patient care; and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children under 6 months old.

Persons in priority groups identified above should be encouraged to search locally for vaccine if their regular health-care provider does not have vaccine available. People who are not included in one of the priority groups mentioned above are asked to forego or defer vaccination because of the vaccine supply situation.

Citizens can take an active role in preventing the flu by:

- Checking with their health care provider to determine if the intra-nasal vaccine or FluMist is appropriate for their age group, of which 1.1 million doses are available.
- Practicing good respiratory hygiene and hand washing may help reduce the risk of getting colds and flu.
- Remaining home from work, school and public places when individuals are sick. This will greatly reduce the potential spread of the flu virus and will help control outbreaks.
- If you get the flu, contact your health care provider to obtain proper treatment.

For more information please visit the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment online at www.scchealth.org or by calling 636-949-7400.

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