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Contact: Lindsay Barr (304) 397-4071

lindsay.barr@wvruralhealth.org

West Virginia Immunization Network Urges Flu Vaccination

Hurricane, WV – As the weather changes, it is not only a reminder that fall is here, but that flu season is approaching. Flu season generally starts in October, peaks between December and February, and can last until May.

Influenza, also called the flu, is a respiratory infection with symptoms such as sore throat, runny nose, cough, muscle or body aches, fever, and fatigue. The influenza virus spreads from person to person in droplets from infected individuals when they cough, sneeze, or talk. The flu can cause mild to severe illness and people who are immunocompromised, over the age of 65, or pregnant are at greater risk for complications from the flu. Young children, especially those younger than 5 years old, are also at higher risk of complications from the flu.

“Flu season is quickly approaching. If there is anything we have learned in the past few years with the pandemic, it is to enjoy good health and to take better care of ourselves and others,” said Dr. Sherri Young, Associate Chief Medical Officer at Charleston Area Medical Center. “The flu is a serious illness, that results in tens of thousands of hospitalizations and deaths each year. Protect yourself, your family and friends by getting the flu shot now, so you can stay healthy together in this flu season,” Young added.

An annual flu shot is the best way to protect against the flu and its complications. The West Virginia Immunization Network urges West Virginia residents to get a flu vaccine this season. A flu shot is recommended every year for everyone 6 months of age and older, regardless of vaccination in previous years. It takes about two weeks to develop immunity, so it is important to get vaccinated before influenza starts spreading in your community.

It is also important to remember that COVID-19 vaccination does not protect against the flu, but you can get a COVID-19 vaccine at the same time as your flu shot.

There are a variety of places you can go to get the flu vaccine, such as a local health department, community vaccination clinics, your healthcare providers’ offices, pharmacies, community health centers, school-based health clinics, and even some workplaces. Most insurance plans cover flu shots. The federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) program also provides vaccines for children 18 years of age and younger who are uninsured, underinsured, Medicaid-eligible, American Indian, or Alaska Native. Providers that participate in the VFC program also provide free vaccines for children with insurance through the West Virginia Children's Health Insurance Program (WVCHIP). For help finding a local healthcare provider who participates in the VFC program, ask your child’s health care provider or contact a local health department.

For adults who do not have insurance or whose health insurance does not cover flu vaccination, free flu shots are available at [community health centers](#) and [local health departments](#).

For more information about the flu and influenza vaccination, talk to your health care provider or visit: www.cdc.gov/flu.

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The West Virginia Immunization Network (WIN) is a statewide coalition of more than 400 public and private sector members who work to protect West Virginians from vaccine-preventable diseases. The Center for Rural Health Development, a non-profit organization with the mission of improving the health of West Virginians and strengthening West Virginia’s health care delivery system, serves as the lead agency for WIN.