



Tom Barrett
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, FACHE
Commissioner of Health

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FIGHT THE FLU MILWAUKEE!

Local officials urge all residents to protect themselves and their loved ones by getting a flu shot

Mayor Tom Barrett and Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker launched the annual city-wide influenza awareness campaign entitled “Fight the Flu Milwaukee!” by offering free shots to the public and unveiling a unique partnership to improve immunization rates. The campaign features ads on county transit buses, print and radio public service announcements promoting the flu hotline and access to flu clinics throughout the city. It is available in both English and Spanish.

“There is a growing need for vaccinations during this flu season and the need to improve awareness and communication to high-risk groups is paramount,” said Commissioner of Health, Bevan K. Baker.

In addition, a new and innovating partnership involving the Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) was announced that aims to improve immunization compliance and boost surge capacity during emergency preparedness. MFD paramedics will administer flu vaccine at two special clinics in local area firehouses. Use of MFD personnel for this type of clinic is a good test of city capacity should there be a need for stand-up community clinics during an emergency such as pandemic flu. Paramedics are trusted members of the healthcare community and building this capacity is good for both the health department and community at large in meeting the medical needs of the public. This partnership is a pilot project based on a model that has been successfully implemented in other parts of the country such as Arizona and Colorado.

“We look forward to enhancing our ability to protect Milwaukee citizens from influenza and other vaccine-preventable illnesses through our relationship with the Milwaukee Fire Department.”

“Our department is happy to lend a helping hand to the City of Milwaukee Health Department for the greater good and the well-being of Milwaukee children,” said MFD Fire Chief Douglas A. Holton. “We hope to build on this partnership in the future and effectively work together to safeguard our community against influenza.”

Each year, influenza causes more than 200,000 hospitalizations and about 36,000 deaths in the United States, mostly in people older than 65. Children under 5 years of age account for 20,000 flu-related hospitalizations and those who are 2-4 years of age are likely to be taken to a doctor, an emergency room, or an urgent care center because of the flu and related complications.

Children under 2 years of age are most likely to be hospitalized by the flu.

Getting a flu shot is the most effective way to prevent infection and spread of the illness.

For the first time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is recommending flu shots for every child 6 months to 18 years old.

Flu shots are also recommended for the following high-risk groups:

- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age or older
- People with chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes or other long-term care facilities
- Health care workers
- Caregivers, including educators and child care workers
- Relatives of those at high risk

The CDC says an estimated 146 million doses will be available during the 2008-2009 influenza season. This is the most flu vaccine ever distributed in the U.S. during a single flu season.

In addition, the agency says that early reports show that the vaccine is a good match for the emerging strain this year.

Although flu vaccine is the most effective way to prevent flu, there are other pro-active measures you can follow to avoid the illness this season.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizer.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your upper sleeve. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use.
- Use your own drinking cups and straws.
- Avoid being exposed to people who are sick with flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Eat nutritious meals, get plenty of rest and do not smoke.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces such as door knobs, refrigerator handle, telephone, or water faucets.

For more information, call the flu hotline 414-286-3616 or visit our website at www.milwaukee.gov/health