



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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CONTACT: Amanda E. Morris
615.741.3111 (office)
615.290.0450 (cell)

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO VACCINATE

TDOH Observes National Influenza Vaccination Week and Launches Social Media

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee Department of Health is reminding all residents that it is not too late to get vaccinated against the flu in the new year, as Governor Phil Bredesen has declared January 10-16, 2010 as National Influenza Vaccination Week in Tennessee. This national health observance highlights the importance of flu vaccinations and continuing steps to keep you and your family healthy during the peak cold and flu season of January and beyond.

“One of the many goals for National Influenza Vaccination Week is to engage at-risk audiences who are not yet vaccinated, hesitant about vaccination or unsure about where to get vaccinated,” said Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN. “Flu activity from both H1N1 and seasonal flu viruses is expected to continue for months, making it vital that we continue to promote the importance of vaccination and flu prevention.”

According to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 60 million people in the United States have already received their dose of an estimated 108 million total available doses of the H1N1 flu vaccine. To date, Tennessee has distributed more than 2.4 million doses of the H1N1 vaccine to health providers across the state. This unprecedented turnout of people who have received flu vaccinations has helped to lessen the impact of the H1N1 flu pandemic.

Tennessee and other states across the country have seen declining numbers in hospital visits and cases of the flu virus over recent weeks. Recent statistics from the Department of Health show the beginnings of a decline in patients admitted to hospitals with influenza or influenza-like illnesses from 9.39 percent at the peak of the most recent second wave of flu to 9.14 percent in late December. There is still sporadic flu activity across the country as well as the possibility of future waves of the virus that leaves room for improvement in vaccination rates among every age and risk group. Tennessee health departments continue to offer the vaccine to anyone who wishes to receive it. To find your nearest flu vaccine locations, visit the Tennessee Department of Health Flu Shot Locator at <http://health.state.tn.us/fluclinic/default.aspx>.

As part of its continuing efforts to share information with the public, the Department is integrating social networking into its arsenal of communication tools. The Tennessee Department of Health is now using Facebook and Twitter to interact with and inform residents of important information related to the flu, and soon will expand to include a variety of health-related topics. Similar to information posted on the Department's Web site, these quickly

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**CORDELL HULL BUILDING, 3RD FLOOR
425 FIFTH AVENUE NORTH
NASHVILLE, TN 37243
WWW.TENNESSEE.GOV/HEALTH**

updated and readily accessible sites can be used in the event of a health or other emergency to get news and advice to the public in the most time-sensitive manner possible.

“The Department of Health is hoping to use these social media tools as additional methods to educate Tennesseans, promote health awareness and curb disease,” said Cooper. “The capabilities of Facebook and Twitter to promote health observances such as National Influenza Vaccination Week and provide critical updates on other health topics have greatly expanded the reach of our message to our audiences.”

To follow the Tennessee Department of Health’s updates, Twitter subscribers can follow “TNDeptofHealth”. To subscribe to Twitter, go to <http://twitter.com/TNDeptofHealth>.

On Facebook, find TDOH’s fan page by searching for Tennessee Department of Health. By clicking the button to become a fan, users will receive regular updates in their Facebook news feeds. To subscribe to Facebook, go to <http://www.facebook.com>.

The Tennessee Department of Health is currently distributing flu prevention posters free of charge to businesses, government agencies and the public encouraging residents to get vaccinated, practice respiratory etiquette and stay home when sick. “What do you do to prevent the flu?” posters are readily available for pick-up at local county health departments for distribution and display at public locations throughout the community.

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