

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DPHHS confirms first influenza cases of the season**

### *Cases confirmed in Missoula and Lewis & Clark Counties*

The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) has confirmed the first influenza cases of the season. To date, five cases have been confirmed with cases involving various age ranges from children to the elderly. Cases include three from Missoula County and two from Lewis and Clark County.

Public health officials say that these first confirmed cases are an important reminder for the public to get vaccinated against influenza as soon as possible. Vaccinations are available now and health care providers and public health authorities recommend taking advantage of the vaccine to prevent catching or spreading the flu.

“It is important to get vaccinated for flu every year because the virus changes and each year’s vaccine is adjusted to take that into consideration,” said DPHHS Director Richard Oppen. “With many vaccine options available, getting vaccinated is easier than ever. We’d like to make sure everyone can stay healthy this winter.”

Influenza vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age and older. Annual vaccination is safe and the most effective method to prevent influenza infections. The composition of the flu vaccine is reviewed each year to protect against the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause disease during the upcoming season.

Individuals seeking vaccine have many options, including a newer quadrivalent shot that covers four different influenza viruses and a high dose flu shot approved for people 65 and older. Public health officials recommend Montanans consult with their healthcare provider regarding the best option.

Protection provided by vaccination lasts throughout the entire flu season, even when vaccine is given in early fall. A new dose is needed every year to keep up active defense against viruses.

“Individuals with asthma, diabetes and many other chronic medical conditions, the elderly, pregnant women and young children can become very ill if infected by influenza”, said Karl Vanderwood of the DPHHS Communicable Disease program. “We urge people to get vaccinated now to protect themselves and others who are vulnerable.”

People wanting to get immunized, or have their children vaccinated, should consult their health care provider. Vaccinations are available at doctor offices, county or tribal health departments, and many pharmacies.

More information can be found at the DPHHS web site: [www.dphhs.mt.gov](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov)