

Cover Sheet

DATE: December 1, 2011

SUBJECT: First 2011 Montana Influenza Cases Identified

INSTRUCTIONS:

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**For LOCAL HEALTH
DEPARTMENT reference only**

DPHHS Subject Matter Resource for more information regarding this HAN, contact:

**DPHHS CDCP
Epidemiology Section
1-406-444-0273**

**DPHHS Health Alert Hotline:
1-800-701-5769**

**DPHHS HAN Website:
www.han.mt.gov**

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Categories of Health Alert Messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Please call DPHHS to update contact information at 444-0919 or 444-6906

Information Sheet

Date: December 1, 2011

Subject: First 2011 Montana Influenza Cases Identified

Information: The first two cases of Influenza A have been confirmed in Gallatin County. The cases do not have travel histories. DPHHS is distributing a news release to provide the public with information about Influenza and National Influenza Vaccination Week. Please see the attached information.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2011

Contact: Jon Ebelt, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, (406) 444-0936
Chuck Council, Communications Specialist, DPHHS, (406) 444-4391

Montana reports first two confirmed influenza cases *National Influenza Vaccination Week December 4-10*

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has announced that National Influenza Vaccination Week, a national observance highlighting the importance of annual influenza vaccination, is December 4-10, 2011.

The event is timely because DPHHS is also announcing the first two confirmed influenza cases have been identified in Gallatin County.

"Influenza is now occurring in Montana," DPHHS Director Anna Whiting Sorrell said. "These two confirmed cases should serve as a reminder to us all of the importance of getting vaccinated against influenza, especially now that the holiday season is here. As families begin to travel and gather for the holiday season, it is more important than ever to immunize yourself and your family members."

According to DPHHS Surveillance Specialist Elton Mosher, there's still time to get vaccinated. "These first two cases are a warning that time is short but it is not too late to get immunized," he said. "The flu vaccine is the most effective and safest way to protect yourself and your family from influenza viruses."

Mosher explained that this is the beginning of a season that typically lasts until May and will sicken as many as 200,000 Montanans during a severe season.

Vaccination remains the cornerstone of preventing influenza. Influenza can spread rapidly as people begin to travel throughout the holiday season. Individuals who are ill can unknowingly expose vulnerable individuals to the influenza virus.

While some people suffer minor complications from influenza infection, the elderly, infants, and those with underlying chronic health conditions can experience complications that can lead to hospitalization and even death. DPHHS recommends that an annual flu vaccination for everyone except babies younger than 6 months and those with unusual allergies and medical conditions.

This year's flu vaccine protects against the three virus strains likely to be most common during the upcoming season and includes the same virus strains used for the 2010-2011 influenza season. The effectiveness of the vaccination lasts throughout the entire flu season, even when given early in the fall.

There are two types of influenza vaccines; the “flu shot” given with a needle, and a nasal-spray flu vaccine. A regular flu shot is available for people 6 months and older, with higher dose shots approved for people 65 and older. The nasal spray is approved for healthy people 2 through 49 years of age. Both types of vaccines protect against the same influenza viruses.

People wanting themselves or their children immunized should consult their health care provider. Vaccinations are available at doctors' offices, county or tribal health departments, and many pharmacies. More information is available from DPHHS or local health departments.

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