

DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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State of Montana  
**DPHHS HAN ADVISORY**

**Forwarding Instructions:**

**FORWARD** to your local HAN contacts at your discretion

**DPHHS Information / Recommendations:**

**Press Release: DPHHS urges everyone 6 months and older to get vaccinated for influenza**

October 22, 2010 See attached press release to be sent out by DPHHS at 2 pm today.

**DPHHS Subject Matter Expert (SME) Contact:**

Immunization Program 444 -5580

**Distributed by the Department of Public Health and Human Services  
Health Alert Network (HAN) System**

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

**DPHHS HAN Website: [www.han.mt.gov](http://www.han.mt.gov)**

You have received this message based upon the information contained within our emergency notification data base. If you have a different e-mail or fax address that you would like us to use please notify us as soon as possible by e-mail at [hhshan@mt.gov](mailto:hhshan@mt.gov).

The goal of Montana's Health Alert Network is to transmit information to local public health authorities as quickly as possible, and assign a suitable priority to the message. For questions or comments about Montana's HAN system you may contact the DPHHS HAN Coordinator, Gerry Wheat at [gwheat@mt.gov](mailto:gwheat@mt.gov).

**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.

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 22, 2010

Contact: Jon Ebelt, Public Information Officer, DPHHS, (406) 444-0936

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# DPHHS urges everyone 6 months and older to get vaccinated for influenza

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is recommending that all Montanans older than six months of age receive an influenza vaccination.

This is the first time the vaccine has been recommended for everyone over 6 months of age, and reflects Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. This year's influenza vaccine protects against three strains of influenza, including the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus which caused the 2009 pandemic.

Last year, because the 2009 H1N1 virus emerged after the seasonal vaccine production had begun, two separate vaccines were needed to protect against both seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 pandemic flu virus. This year only one vaccine is necessary. Vaccination against influenza remains the best approach to preventing infection.

"A routine influenza vaccination is the best line of defense for protecting you and your family from this disease," DPHHS Director Anna Whiting Sorrell said. "Every influenza season is different and even healthy people can get sick. Now is the perfect time to get vaccinated."

Although everyone will benefit from the vaccine, DPHHS continues to emphasize the importance of vaccinating people in Montana who are considered to be at greater risk for severe illness if infected. Whiting Sorrell also said that local and tribal health departments have plenty of vaccine for everyone in Montana.

People most at risk for complications are women who are pregnant and individuals that have chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or other conditions that reduce immunity to influenza. Other people that are at higher risk of infection or are likely to spread influenza viruses to vulnerable populations are health care workers and caregivers.

Children, too, are considered to be at higher risk in Montana. In 2008-2009, Montana's children were less likely than their national counterparts to have been vaccinated for influenza. A national survey estimated that only 34% of the state's children aged 6-23 months were vaccinated compared to the U.S. average of 42%. Children under two years of age are at high-risk for complications and many end up hospitalized if infected by influenza. "Because influenza can cause substantial increases in death and hospitalizations, public health agencies will be making every effort to vaccinate Montana's young children," says DPHHS State Medical Officer Steve Helgerson.

In addition to getting vaccinated, health officials strongly recommend that people take very important, common sense steps to prevent infection. Those steps include covering coughs and sneezes, frequent hand washing, and staying home when sick to prevent infecting others. For more information on ways to protect yourself and others from becoming a victim of influenza contact your local health department or visit the DPHHS website at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov>.