



November 19, 2013

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## **MEDIA AVAILABILITY**

### **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PARTNERS WITH JACKSON HEALTH SYSTEM TO EDUCATE PUBLIC ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FLU VACCINE**

**What:** Leaders from the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County will join Jackson physicians at a media availability, where they will discuss the importance of getting the flu vaccine.

**Who:** Lillian Rivera, R.N., M.S.N., Ph.D., Administrator, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County; L. Silvia Muñoz-Price, M.D., Medical Director of Infection Control at Jackson Memorial Hospital; Judy Schaechter, M.D., M.B.A., Interim Chair, Department of Pediatrics, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Adolescent Medicine, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Chief of Service, Holtz Children's Hospital, Chair, Immunization Coalition Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County

**When:** 10 a.m., Wednesday, November 20, 2013

**Where:** Jackson Memorial Hospital  
In front of the Clark Diagnostic Treatment Center  
Corner of Northwest 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 19<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, FL 33136

\*Media can park outside of DTC.

Statewide surveillance shows that influenza (flu) activity is increasing in South Florida, prompting the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County and Jackson to remind the community that now is the best time to get vaccinated for flu. While it is too soon to tell how severe the influenza season will be, public health experts see the recent trend as a good opportunity to remind people how important it is to take precautions.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. Flu season occurs in the fall and winter and flu activity usually peaks in January or February, but can occur as early as October and extend to May.

Flu causes mild to severe illness, and may lead to death. Influenza leads to approximately 200,000 hospitalizations every year in the United States. During the 30 years between 1976 and 2006, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States ranged from 3,000 to 49,000 people.

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone who is at least 6 months of age get an annual flu vaccine. Certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu and are encouraged to receive flu vaccine, including pregnant women, older people, young children, people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease), and persons who live in facilities like nursing homes.

This year's vaccine protects against the strains of flu that are expected to circulate this year, including H1N1. Vaccination is available in both nasal spray or injection (shot) forms.

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. A flu vaccine reduces your risk of illness, hospitalization, or even death and can prevent you from spreading the virus to your loved ones. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get vaccinated against the flu. Pregnant women, young children, older people, and people with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease are at increased risk of serious flu-related complications, so getting a yearly flu vaccine is especially important for them. In addition to getting a flu vaccine, take everyday precautions, like washing your hands, to protect your health. If you are exposed to or caring for someone with the flu, talk to your doctor about preventive antiviral medications.

Everyday prevention measures that may be taken to prevent flu include:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Practice good health habits. Get plenty of sleep and exercise, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat healthy food.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Flu vaccine is available at no charge for children at the health department. Doctors' offices, many pharmacies and other locations also provide flu vaccine for both adults and children. Jackson Health System is offering low-cost flu vaccines at its clinics throughout Miami-Dade County. Information on locations is available at [www.jacksonhealth.org](http://www.jacksonhealth.org)

For more information on the flu vaccine, please call the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, Immunization Services at 786-845-0550 or visit [www.dadehealth.org](http://www.dadehealth.org)

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