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## FLU SEASON BEGINNING TO PICK UP

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**Hillsborough County, Fla.** – A large increase in influenza (flu) activity in schools has been reported to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough). Those who haven't received the flu vaccine for this flu season should get it now. Flu activity typically peaks between December and February, and it can last as late as May.

Yearly flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.

In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading flu to others. In addition, there are prescription medications called antiviral drugs that can be used to treat influenza illness.

The flu can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu infection can result in hospitalization or death. Some people, such as young children, the elderly and people with certain health conditions, are at higher risk for serious complications from the flu. Some children are at especially high risk for flu-related complications: children less than 5 years old, American Indian and Alaskan Native children, and children with chronic health problems.

While rare, flu-associated pediatric deaths are reported each season, most often in unvaccinated children with underlying health conditions. Last season, six flu-associated pediatric deaths were reported in Florida, and all occurred in children who were not fully vaccinated. Flu vaccination can reduce a child's risk of dying from flu. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/flu](http://cdc.gov/flu).

County health departments, many pharmacies and primary care physician offices offer flu shots. DOH-Hillsborough offers the flu vaccine at no cost for eligible children. Adults 19 to 64 are charged \$30 and those 65 or older are charged \$60.

Those with questions about immunization services can call the DOH-Hillsborough Immunizations Clinic at (813) 307-8077 or visit 8605 N. Mitchell Ave, Tampa, FL 33604.

For information about the flu and to find other locations to get the seasonal vaccine, go to [www.FluFreeFlorida.com](http://www.FluFreeFlorida.com).

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