

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2007

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SAVE TIME. SAVE MONEY. SAVE LIVES.
Health Officials Underscore the Value of a Flu Shot

(Richmond, Va.)-People have plenty of excuses for not getting a flu shot: “It makes me sick.” “I get the flu anyway”. “The flu isn’t serious enough to get the shot.” The myths are many, but the facts are simple. The flu shot saves lives, and is the single most effective way to keep your family flu-free this season.

Flu is a common virus, but it can be a killer. Each year in this country approximately 226,000 people are hospitalized with seasonal flu and about 36,000 die. The very young, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions like diabetes, heart or lung disease are at greatest risk of complications from flu. However, even otherwise healthy people are stricken with influenza each year, resulting in lost time from work and increased medical expenses. For recommendations and guidelines for those at highest risk, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/persons.htm>

Everyone working in a healthcare environment has a responsibility to get vaccinated against flu, but only 40 percent of health care workers get a flu shot each year. This season, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is calling on health care partners, emphasizing their role in preventing the spread of flu.

“Getting a flu shot not only sets a good example, it is one of the easiest things you can do to protect your patients,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

“There is enough vaccine this year to go around,” said VDH Immunization Director James Farrell. VDH has already started to receive the 237,000 doses of vaccine ordered

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this year. About 128,000 of those doses were made available to providers in the Vaccines for Children Program, which provides federally purchased vaccine at no cost to health care providers, for administration to eligible children. The remaining vaccine will be administered by local health departments, free clinics, and during 18 emergency preparedness clinic exercises statewide.

“The bottom line is everyone should get their flu shot,” stated Farrell. “A flu shot is the single most effective way to prevent getting the flu.”

In addition to getting vaccinated, there are a number of things people can do to prevent spreading the flu:

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water often, especially before and after you eat
- Stay home from work if you think you have the flu and keep your kids out of school if they might have it
- Cough or sneeze into your arm or sleeve, not your hands
- Keep tissues and sanitizing gel or wipes handy — for your hands and for surfaces like telephones that are touched by numerous people

Visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/flu to download a media toolkit with a list of flu myths, frequently asked questions, story ideas by beat, a list of who's who in flu, PSAs, and other helpful materials.

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