

Plenty of Flu Vaccine Expected, Although part of some orders delayed

by Bend Weekly News Source

Oregon and the nation expect to have more vaccine available this year than ever, although as much as 50 percent of this year's supply may not arrive in Oregon until November and December.

"Supplies are arriving in Oregon daily but we encourage patience and persistence in seeking vaccinations this year," said Lorraine Duncan, immunization manager in the Oregon Department of Human Services Public Health Division.

Duncan said public health officials are encouraging communities, providers and families to jointly organize vaccination clinics through the holidays. She said it's never too late to get a flu shot during influenza season, which in Oregon typically peaks in February.

Influenza, a contagious virus-caused respiratory illness, annually kills an estimated 36,000 people in the United States.

FluMist, a nasal spray vaccine, is not affected by distribution delays. "We're encouraging healthy people between ages 5 and 49 who want vaccine, including health-care workers and people in contact with infants, to ask for FluMist," said Susan Allan, M.D., state public health director at DHS. "Choosing FluMist means you are helping to conserve injectable influenza vaccine and it may help to avoid spreading the flu to others who are more vulnerable. Your decision could save a life."

Locating available flu vaccine has gotten easier: Oregon SafeNet and the Lung Association of Oregon have joined forces to post Oregon flu clinics on the American Lung Association of Oregon Web site at www.lungoregon.org. Or people without Internet access may call SafeNet toll free at 1-800-723-3638. Another resource is www.getaflushot.com.

Among 27 counties responding to state officials' queries about availability of flu vaccine, only Washington and Wallowa reported ample supplies currently. Duncan said public health officials in Douglas, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Polk, Tillamook and Yamhill counties reported having concerns about having adequate vaccine supplies.

She said the American Lung Association of Oregon Web site lists 357 clinics scheduled so far statewide, and that Kaiser Permanente is scheduling flu-shot clinics beginning Oct. 14.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 100 million doses of influenza vaccine will be produced for the U.S. this flu season, or 17 million doses more than were distributed in any prior year.

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