

Flu Activity on the Rise

As many of you are aware, the Centers for Disease Control has reported that flu activity continues to increase dramatically across Massachusetts and the United States. The best way to protect yourself from getting sick is by getting vaccinated, even if you got the flu shot last year. It is not too late to get your flu shot! The CDC recommends that *everyone 6 months of age and older receive a flu vaccine every year.*

Flu can be very serious — every year in Massachusetts, an average of 5,000 people are hospitalized due to complications from the flu, resulting in up to 800 deaths. The good news is that there are simple things you can do to protect yourself and your family from the flu.

- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Use a tissue or your inner elbow, not your hands
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Get a seasonal flu shot. This is especially important if you are pregnant; have a chronic health condition like asthma, diabetes or heart disease; are immuno-suppressed; are very overweight; or are 50 years of age or older.

Flu vaccination is also especially important for children younger than 5 years of age, who are at a higher risk of complications if they get the flu. For the same reason, if you're a caregiver or household contact of children less than five years old it's important that you get vaccinated as well.

The flu vaccine is safe and effective, and widely available. There is more vaccine available this year than ever before.

To find out where you can get a flu vaccine:

- Call your health care provider;
- Check with your local pharmacy

For more information about flu, flu vaccine, and other ways that you and your family can stay healthy this flu season, please visit www.mass.gov/flu