

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**Celeste Philip, MD, MPH**  
Surgeon General and Secretary

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

January 18, 2018

Dear Colleague:

Influenza and influenza-like illness activity levels are high across the state in people of all age groups. Florida is experiencing a moderately severe season with emergency department visits for influenza-like illness well above peak levels observed in previous seasons and more outbreaks reported than in previous seasons at this time.

**The Florida Department of Health urges you to actively identify, recommend and offer flu vaccine to patients in your clinics who have not received their 2017-18 influenza vaccinations.** Studies have shown that people are more likely to get vaccinated if it is recommended by their provider. Everyone aged six months and older is recommended to receive annual flu vaccine with only rare exceptions. Please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/index.htm> for additional information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding influenza vaccination, antivirals, and chemoprophylaxis.

**Influenza A (H3) has been the predominantly circulating strain of influenza so far this season in Florida, however, influenza B viruses are also circulating throughout the state.** Seasons where influenza A (H3) predominantly circulates are often associated with increased deaths, hospitalizations, and outbreaks, particularly in adults aged 65 years and older and children.

**CDC recommends the use of antiviral treatment as soon as possible for all persons with suspected influenza for all hospitalizations, severely ill, and people who are at higher risk for complications (children under 2 years old, adults aged 65 years and older, pregnant women, and those with underlying medical conditions).** Treatment should be administered within 48 hours of illness onset (but treatment administered after this period can still be beneficial). **A recent CDC health advisory stresses the importance of rapid and early antiviral treatment this season** ([http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/\\_documents/cdc-han-influenza-12-27-2017.pdf](http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/_documents/cdc-han-influenza-12-27-2017.pdf)). **Clinicians should not wait for laboratory confirmation to administer antivirals for suspect influenza.**

Contact your county health department ([www.floridahealth.gov/CHDEpiContact](http://www.floridahealth.gov/CHDEpiContact)) if

- You suspect an outbreak of flu or influenza-like illness (especially in a defined setting such as a school or long-term care facility), an influenza-associated pediatric death, or if you see an unusually severe presentation of flu;
- You think a patient may be infected with novel influenza; or
- You suspect antiviral resistance in a patient.

Influenza outbreaks of any kind and influenza-associated pediatric mortalities are required to be reported per Chapter 64D-3, Florida Administrative Code ([www.floridahealth.gov/DiseaseReporting](http://www.floridahealth.gov/DiseaseReporting)). Please visit [www.floridahealth.gov/floridaflu](http://www.floridahealth.gov/floridaflu) for further guidance, surveillance data, and weekly flu report (*Florida Flu Review*). Thank you for your important contribution to protecting Floridians from influenza!

Sincerely,

Carina Blackmore, DVM, PhD, Dipl ACVPM  
Director, Division of Disease Control & Health Protection  
State Epidemiologist