

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Department of Health Launches “Stopping the Flu Starts with YOU” Campaign; Urges Pennsylvanians to Get Influenza Vaccine**

*Annual vaccines are key to flu protection*

**Hershey, PA** – Department of Health Secretary Dr. Karen Murphy today launched the annual “Stopping the Flu Starts with YOU” campaign at the Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center by getting her annual flu vaccine.

“It takes just seconds, but getting a flu shot is one of the most important steps to protect yourself from influenza,” Secretary Murphy said. “This year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends getting an injection of the vaccine over the nasal mist. It is especially important that at-risk populations like the very young, the very old, pregnant women, and those with chronic medical conditions get vaccinated against the flu every year.”

The “Stopping the Flu Starts with YOU” campaign is an annual effort to encourage Pennsylvanians to protect themselves and their loved ones against seasonal flu by getting vaccinated and taking other preventative measures.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older. There are two important reasons to get a flu vaccine every year. First, flu viruses are constantly changing, and vaccines may be updated yearly to protect against the viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming flu season. Second, a person’s immune system protection from the vaccine decreases over time.

In addition to getting vaccinated, the Department of Health asks all Pennsylvanians to consider practicing the following preventive measures:

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw any used tissues in the trash.
- Keep hands away from face, and don't touch eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Disinfect frequently used surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, TV remotes, or countertops.
- Avoid contact with individuals who may have the flu. When sick, stay home until at least 24 hours after your fever goes away on its own without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. In the U.S., it is estimated that an average of five to 20 percent of the population gets the flu, and hundreds of thousands are hospitalized from seasonal flu-related complications. During Pennsylvania's last flu season, there were 31,940 reported cases of flu and 64 reported deaths from flu complications in the commonwealth. Rates of serious illness and death are highest among persons over the age of 65 and individuals of any age who have chronic medical conditions that place them at increased risk for complications from influenza.

For more information about influenza, visit [www.flufreepa.com](http://www.flufreepa.com).

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