



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Montana Flu Season Has Arrived
Time for prevention is now

Helena - Montana's flu season is here. A Deer Lodge County resident is Montana's first confirmed case of Influenza B for the 2008-2009 season.

The flu is a highly contagious illness caused by the influenza virus. It spreads from infected persons to the nose or throat of others. Flu causes fever, sore scratchy throat, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, dry cough, and chills. Anyone can catch the flu. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), every year in the US more than 200,000 people are hospitalized with the flu and about 36,000 die from its complications. Ninety percent of those deaths occur in those ages 65 and older, but the highest rates of infection occur in children. And healthy children younger than two years of age are as likely to land in the hospital because of influenza as those over 65.

Now is the time to get vaccinated against the flu! The flu season in the United States can last as late as May and routine immunization is the most effective way to prevent influenza and decrease influenza-related complications, which can include serious illness and death. Vaccine is available to anyone who wants to reduce his or her chances of getting influenza.

The good news is that a flu shot can prevent influenza and serious influenza-related illness. Protection against the flu develops within two weeks after being vaccinated. People of all ages, from six months of age to seniors can get a flu shot. There is ample supply to go around. "So, the time to get a shot of prevention is now," says Kay Robertson, R.N., public health nurse at the Health Department.

The City-County Health Department offers flu shots on a sliding fee scale every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11 AM – 4:30 PM. For more information, call the **Flu Hotline at 457-8904** or stop by the Health Department at 1930 Ninth Avenue.

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The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.