

Fast Start to Flu Season Predicted

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Written by Putnam County



Three Public Clinics Scheduled this Fall.

Flu season will be here in Putnam County soon. The word from experts who monitor the flu's earlier arrival in other parts of the world is not encouraging. Australia for example had triple the number of influenza cases soon after the start of their season last May. The good news is

the Putnam County Department of Health has scheduled its fall flu clinics and residents can mark their calendars to make sure they get their shots on time.

"To protect yourself, your family and your community, get a flu shot," says County Executive MaryEllen Odell. "It is an easy, relatively painless, step you can take, and our health department works to make it convenient for you. Clinics are open to the public at local fire departments, and our nurses travel to senior centers and our schools to immunize these residents."

Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, Commissioner of Health, also strongly recommends getting a flu shot, saying, "Getting vaccinated is your best option, even if the vaccine is not 100 percent effective. When you get a flu shot and you still get the flu, your chance of serious complications is reduced, along with the length of time you may be sick. People forget how serious the flu can be. Nearly 80,000 people died from it here in the U.S. the season before last," he said, referring to the estimate from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The dates and locations for the three scheduled fall clinics are: Monday, September 23, at the Carmel Fire Department, 94 Gleneida Avenue (Route 52) and Vink Drive; Thursday, October 10, at the Garrison Fire Department, 1616 Route 9, and Monday, October 21, at the Carmel Fire Department. Each clinic runs from 2 to 6:30 p.m.

Early vaccination is important. The shot only starts to work about two weeks after it is given. Certain people should be extra sure to get vaccinated. They include pregnant women; children 6 months through 18 years of age; people over 50 years of age; those with chronic, or long-lasting, medical conditions, and those who live with or care for them. Health care workers are also required to get the flu vaccine to protect their patients.

Flu shots are important for other reasons too. Medical costs and work absenteeism are reduced. Flu immunization is also the right thing to do for the community. It builds "herd immunity," protecting those who can't be vaccinated because they are too young or have a specific medical condition.

The public flu clinics are open to all Putnam County residents 18 years of age and older. Proof of residency is required, along with a signed consent form. Forms will be available at the clinics, but residents are encouraged to download and complete the form ahead of time. Forms are posted on the health department's immunization page on the Putnam County website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health/immunization. The fee for vaccination is \$25 for residents under 65 years of age. Those 65 years and older, or with a Medicare card, can receive the vaccine free of charge. High-dose flu vaccine is being offered for seniors, aged 65 years and older, as studies show this vaccine is more effective for this population. (Pneumonia vaccine will not be offered at the flu clinics.)

Additional public flu clinics may be held later this year. Information on future dates will be posted on the health department's website and on social media, and announced on the department's flu hotline. The number is 808-1390, press option "2." For school clinics check the school calendar or with the school nurse for details.

***The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit our County website at www.putnamcountyny.com ; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY*



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