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## State Encourages High Risk to Make Appointment for Flu Shot Now Department of Health Orders Additional Supply for Pilot Project in Schools

(Santa Fe) – The New Mexico Department of Health and New Mexico Influenza Vaccine Consortium encourage New Mexicans at higher risk of developing flu complications to protect themselves by making appointments with their health-care provider to get their flu shots soon. The Department of Health has sent 70,000 adult flu shots to public health offices and the department's long-term care facilities across the state.

The Department has also begun shipping children's flu vaccine to public health offices and private providers statewide. Manufacturers typically send flu vaccine in several shipments. The Department expects to receive children's vaccine throughout October and will ship as it receives vaccine.

For information about scheduled flu-shot clinics, call Nurse Advice New Mexico toll-free at 866-681-5872 or look up the Department of Health's website, [www.nmhealth.org](http://www.nmhealth.org).

"The flu shot is an important protection for everyone, especially people who are at the greatest risk for developing serious flu complications," said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil. "We provide flu shots to people in New Mexico who can't get their flu shot anywhere else."

New Mexicans should contact their health care providers to receive a flu shot. The Department's public health offices provide flu shots to people who are at high risk for serious illness or death and people who have no health insurance. Public health offices are listed in the phonebook's blue pages under state government. Contact information for public health offices is listed at [www.nmhealth.org](http://www.nmhealth.org).

For the first time this year, six hospitals are reporting vaccination rates of its health care workers as a part of the Department's pilot project for measuring healthcare associated infections. "We expect that as a result of reporting their data to us, the hospitals will improve their immunization rates of health care workers, who can pass the flu to their vulnerable patients," Dr. Vigil said.

This year, the Department of Health ordered 70,000 doses of adult flu vaccine and 206,000 doses of children's flu vaccine, which includes 100,000 doses of FluMist, a nasal spray for ages 2 to 18 years. The extra supply will help the Department immunize about 30,000 children during a pilot project this year in a sample of schools and child care centers. The Department will release more details once schedules are finalized. School and public health staff will send parents information and consent forms before the pilot begins next month.

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The State Immunization Program developed the pilot project in response to the new national recommendation that children ages 6 months through 18 years should receive flu shots annually. The previous recommendation was for children up to age 5.

Those who face a higher risk of serious illness, death or exposing others to flu are encouraged to receive their vaccines starting this month. They are:

- Residents of long-term care facilities
- Persons ages 2-64 years with chronic health conditions, such as asthma or other breathing problems, kidney disease, heart disease, diabetes, muscle or nerve disorders that can lead to breathing or swallowing problems, and children on long-term aspirin therapy.
- Children age 6 months up to their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Persons ages 50 years and older
- Pregnant women
- Health care workers who provide direct patient care
- Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children up to age 5, or anyone at increased risk of flu complications

To avoid catching the flu or passing it on to others, people should frequently wash their hands, cover their mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing and stay home when ill.

Many of the people at high risk for a flu shot should also get a pneumonia shot if they have never had one. Everyone age 65 and older needs to have a pneumonia shot.

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