

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
September 29, 2016

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### **North Dakota Department of Health Encourages Everyone to Get Vaccinated Against Flu**

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) reminds North Dakotans that everyone six months and older should get vaccinated against influenza. According to Lexie Barber, Epidemiologist with the NDDoH, “Getting the flu vaccine is the easiest way to protect yourself, as well as your friends and family, from the flu.”

Anyone can get the flu, including healthy individuals. When more people get the flu vaccine, the virus does not spread as easily to those who are vulnerable to serious complications from the flu—including infants and young children, pregnant women, people 65 years and older, and those with chronic medical conditions.

Influenza is a respiratory disease. The most common symptoms are fever, cough, sore throat, headache, chills, and body aches. In North Dakota, influenza activity begins in the fall and typically peaks between January and March. The first influenza cases for the 2016-2017 season have already been reported in the state. Health officials say that people can get vaccinated anytime during the influenza season, but the best time to get vaccinated is as soon as vaccine becomes available and by the end of October.

This summer, the NDDoH received a report of an influenza-related pediatric death. “This death serves as a sobering reminder that influenza can be deadly,” said influenza surveillance coordinator Jill Baber. “This is one reason why influenza vaccination is recommended for everyone, every year.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 85 pediatric influenza deaths were reported nationwide for the 2015-2016 season.

This year, live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), also known as nasal spray or Flumist<sup>®</sup>, is not recommended. This was determined after data showed poor or relatively low effectiveness of LAIV from 2013 through 2016. Everyone is recommended to receive the flu shot over the nasal mist.

Many health care providers have already begun offering influenza vaccine. North Dakotans are encouraged to contact their health care provider, local public health unit, or pharmacist for information about influenza vaccine availability in their area.

For more information, contact Lexie Barber or Jill Baber, NDDoH, at 701.328.2378. Information about influenza can be found at [www.ndflu.com](http://www.ndflu.com).

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