

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
October 18, 2016

For More Information, Contact:
Lexie Barber or Jill Baber
Division of Disease Control
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: abarber@nd.gov
jbaber@nd.gov

North Dakota Department of Health Urges Everyone to Get Vaccinated This Flu Season



NDSU Student-Athlete Easton Stick receives his annual flu vaccine from NDSU School of Pharmacy 4th Year Student John Curley.

FARGO, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) highlighted the need for influenza vaccination for everyone at North Dakota State University’s (NDSU) annual flu vaccination event, held Monday, Oct. 17. Each year NDSU student athletes file into the Fargodome to receive their annual flu shots.

-continued-

During yesterday's news conference, NDSU student-athlete, Easton Stick was vaccinated by John Curley, a 4th-year student at the NDSU School of Pharmacy. NDSU Associate Director of Athletics Scott Woken said, "Our student-athletes have many physical and time demands placed upon them during the academic year. Getting a flu shot is an easy way to potentially prevent them from contracting influenza and keeping them from missing any of their academic requirements. In addition, we want to keep them healthy to minimize the amount of time they may miss for practice and/or competitions."

"It is anticipated that there will be an adequate supply of flu vaccine this year. We are urging everyone to get vaccinated to avoid influenza, regardless of age or health status," said Lexie Barber, immunization surveillance coordinator for the NDDoH. "Getting vaccinated is the easiest and most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu. Vaccination is important, even for healthy people. Everyone is close to someone who is at high risk for complications due to influenza, so it is important to get vaccinated to protect ourselves and those around you."

In North Dakota, influenza activity begins in the fall and typically peaks between January and March. Health officials say people can get vaccinated any time during the influenza season, but the best time to get vaccinated is now when flu activity is low.

Alicia Fitz, Director of the NDSU Student Health Pharmacy, which sponsors the NDSU vaccination event each season, was also in attendance. According to Fitz, "The Athletic Department, School of Pharmacy, and Student Health Service have been working together for the last 8 years to get our student-athletes vaccinated against the flu in the fall. Not only does this help keep our "herd" healthy to maintain their busy academic and athletic schedules, the event also provides our pharmacy students the opportunity to hone their immunization skills right on campus."

During the 2015-16 season, there were 1,924 cases of flu, including 69 hospitalizations and five confirmed deaths, including one death in a child.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone age 6 months and older be vaccinated against the flu, especially the following people at high risk for complications:

- All children age 6 months through 4 years
- All adults 50 and older
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- People of any age who have long-term health problems or weakened immune systems
- Pregnant women
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- People who are extremely obese

-continued-

People who could spread the disease to those at high risk, such as healthcare workers, caregivers, parents, or household contacts to anyone at high risk should also be vaccinated.

“This past season was later than average, and we saw fewer cases than the previous season,” said Jill Baber, influenza surveillance coordinator. “However, influenza can be unpredictable. People should not assume this year we will have another late season. Influenza vaccination is the best way to stop the spread of flu.”

Flu shot clinics are being planned by providers, pharmacies, and local public health units across the state, and vaccination is also often available from these sources by appointment. Residents are encouraged to contact their local public health unit, doctor, or pharmacist for information about 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.

REMEMBER: A flu vaccine can protect not only you but everyone around you.

###

Please note: High-resolution photos of this event are available for download at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/145935260@N04/with/30110249510/>

To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at <https://health.nd.gov/news-media/news-releases>.

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ndhealth or Twitter at twitter.com/nddoh.