

2020 – 2021 SEASONAL INFLUENZA ADVISORY

Every fall and winter is the time period where seasonal influenza viruses are most active and may effect approximately 8% of our population. Although we are focusing on the pandemic, seasonal influenza is still a major health concern. The COVID 19 Pandemic has made it even more important to protect ourselves from flu by doing the following:

- **GET VACCINATED FOR SEASONAL FLU IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER**

People that are 65 years and older should get vaccinated with the senior dose vaccine that provides added protection for older adults. Those 18 - 64 years should get the regular strength vaccine. Both vaccines protect against four strains of flu and contain dead viruses. Vaccinating after October will still give some protection for flu.

People that are most at risk for flu illness and complications are older adults, those with compromised immune systems usually because of diabetes, cancer, cardio pulmonary diseases or other debilitating conditions and children under 5 years old.

Getting vaccinated should provide added protection for the person receiving the vaccine and everyone around them. Physicians should be consulted for children and pregnant women getting vaccinated or if you are unsure if the vaccine is right for you.

Residents may contact their physicians or local pharmacies to get vaccinated. Calling ahead will insure that the vaccine that is indicated is in stock and making an appointment may reduce the time spent getting vaccinated and less exposure to other people. CVS, Walgreens, Shop Rite, Walmart, Target or other local pharmacies will have supplies of season flu vaccine. Medicare/Medicare HMOs, Medicaid and private health insurance should cover the cost of the vaccine. Federally Qualified Health Centers (FHQs) such as Zufall will provide vaccinations to uninsured residents.

Changes in Insurance Coverage, especially Medicare HMOs has made it difficult for the Health Department to provide seasonal flu vaccines at no cost to the residents while physicians and pharmacies are able to bill most insurance companies. When the COVID 19 vaccine is distributed from the State Department of Health, it will be at no cost and the Health Department will be participating in this vaccination program.

- **COVER COUGHS AND SNEEZES**

Even though many masks and face coverings are being worn due to COVID 19, the practice of coughing or sneezing into your elbow should continue to be followed, especially when your face is uncovered.

- **WASH YOUR HANDS**

Wash your hands frequently for 20 seconds throughout the day and use sanitizer when possible. Don't touch yours eyes, nose or mouth with your hands to prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria.

- **STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK**

If you do not feel well, have a temperature, are coughing and sneezing and think you may becoming ill stay home and do not go to work, stores or other events, especially indoors, to prevent the spread of the flu. Call your Physician for an influenza test and you may be prescribed a medication that reduces the severity of the illness.