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NEWS RELEASE

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2021-2022 INFLUENZA SEASON

Influenza (commonly called “flu”) is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. These viruses are spread when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes or touches a surface handled by others. It can be mild or severe and infects millions of Americans every year. And, since the flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will be circulating this season, it is possible to have flu, as well as other respiratory illnesses, and COVID-19 at the same time. Getting a flu vaccine is especially important to protect your health, your family’s health, coworkers, health care workers and the community this season. **COVID-19 vaccine boosters will not be offered at the Influenza Clinics.**

In 2021-22, the seasonal and high dose influenza vaccines contain four (quadrivalent) influenza virus strains: one Influenza A-like (H3N2) virus, one Influenza A-like (H1N1) virus and two Influenza B-like viruses. Both the seasonal quadrivalent influenza vaccine and the quadrivalent higher dose vaccine for people 65 years of age and older will be offered by the Department. The viruses in the flu shot are inactivated (not live), so **you cannot get the flu from a flu shot.** However, the vaccine can trigger an immune response from your body, so you may have a few mild symptoms, like achy muscles or a low-grade fever.

It is important to understand that the **Influenza Vaccine is NOT protective against COVID-19.** Although Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, they are caused by different viruses. Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. People who are experiencing respiratory or other flu like symptoms should consult their health care provider as testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. The CDC recommends that a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, regardless of symptoms, wait until criteria have been met for them to discontinue isolation. To avoid exposing healthcare personnel and other people to COVID-19, postpone your vaccination visit and consult your health care provider.

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The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get vaccinated. It takes up to two weeks after vaccination for protection (immunity) to develop in the majority of adults. To ensure proper protection from the seasonal flu virus, which can begin to circulate early in the fall, the Greenwich Department of Health has scheduled immunization clinics in October.

Director of Health, Caroline C. Baisley, emphasized, *"Getting your annual flu vaccine is the best, most effective thing you can do to keep from getting the flu, and from spreading it to family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Many people at higher risk from flu also seem to be at higher risk from COVID-19. If you are at high risk, get a flu vaccine this year."*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all persons 6 months of age and older should be immunized; however, it is especially important for the following groups to receive flu vaccine:

- All children aged 6 months through 59 months (the highest risk is for those younger than two years old) and all persons aged 50 years and older, especially adults over 65
- Persons 6 months of age and older with underlying chronic medical conditions such as asthma, cardiovascular disease (except isolated hypertension), diabetes, neurological, liver or kidney disorders and immunosuppression, that require frequent or ongoing medical management.
- People who have had a stroke
- Pregnant people and people up to two weeks after the end of pregnancy
- Healthcare workers and residents in long term care facilities and nursing homes
- Hispanic and Latino persons, Non-Hispanic Black persons, American Indians and Alaska Natives
- Persons who are morbidly obese with a Body Mass Index (BMI) ≥ 40

Who Should NOT Get the Seasonal Flu Shot

- ✦ People who have had a **severe or life threatening allergic reaction** to eggs, to a flu vaccine in the past, or are allergic to other components of the vaccine. (Persons with a history of egg allergy, who have experienced only hives after exposure to egg, should receive influenza vaccine. In this case, vaccine should be administered only by a physician who is familiar with the potential manifestations of egg allergy.)
- ✦ People who previously developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) should consult their health care provider
- ✦ Children less than 6 months of age
- ✦ People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait until their symptoms lessen before receiving a vaccination
- ✦ People with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, regardless of symptoms, should defer vaccination until all criteria for Isolation are met.
- ✦ **People younger than age 65 should not receive the High Dose vaccine**

Consult your primary care provider about Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) – nasal spray contraindications or precautions.

"Although the single best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated, there are other ways to protect you from flu and other respiratory illnesses," notes Director of Family Health, Deborah C. Travers.

- ✦ **Seek medical care early.** Consult your health care provider immediately if you develop flu symptoms.
- ✦ **Stay home from work or school when you are sick.** Keep your distance from others when you are sick except to seek medical care. Your fever (100° F and above) should be gone for at least 24 hours without using fever reducing medications or antiviral drugs. It could take up to one week or more to feel better.

- ✦ **Take flu antiviral medications if your doctor prescribes them.**
- ✦ **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you sneeze or cough
- ✦ **Wash your hands** with soap and water frequently. If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based cleaners (at least 60% alcohol ingredient) are effective.
- ✦ **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth** to prevent the spread of germs.
- ✦ **Get plenty of sleep, water, healthy food and exercise**
- ✦ **Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces** that may be contaminated with germs.

Children Under the age of 9 not eligible for these clinics:

Seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for all persons aged 6 months of age and older, however, immunizations will not be administered to individuals under 9 years of age at the Department clinics. Parents are advised to contact their pediatricians for an appointment and dose requirements for children six months to eight years of age.

Pneumococcal Vaccines

The CDC recommends pneumococcal vaccination (PCV13/Prevnar13[®] or PPSV23/Pneumovax23[®]) for all adults 65 years or older. Both pneumococcal vaccines will be offered at the clinics and are available at the Department of Health year round. Call (203) 622-6495 for additional information about receiving a pneumonia vaccine or other recommended vaccines for adults.

Additional Information:

During the influenza season, the public is encouraged to call the Department of Health flu information hotline for up-to-date information at (203) 622-3774, or visit the Department's website main page at www.greenwichct.gov/