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## **Alaska recognizes National Influenza Vaccination Week**

*Public Health to waive administrative fee for flu vaccine at clinics statewide December 7-13*

ANCHORAGE — In an effort to encourage more Alaskans to get immunized against the flu, State public health centers, the Municipality of Anchorage and Maniilaq Association will be waiving the standard fee for flu vaccine administration during National Influenza Vaccination Week (December 7-13).

National Influenza Vaccination Week is a national observance that was established to highlight the importance of continuing influenza vaccination. State officials are taking this opportunity to remind residents to get vaccinated against the flu to reduce the risk of contracting influenza.

Influenza activity in Alaska has greatly increased in recent weeks and has been confirmed in all regions of the state, according to Alaska Division of Public Health Epidemiologists. The best protection against the flu is vaccination. “Getting vaccinated as soon as possible is important so that people can develop immunity before the holiday gatherings—a time when respiratory viruses are often spread,” said Dr. Joe McLaughlin, chief epidemiologist with the Alaska Division of Public Health.

While some of the influenza A strains circulating nationally are not a great match to the vaccine, many are, and vaccination still offers the best protection we have against

seasonal flu. Moreover, there is evidence that persons who received the flu vaccine and subsequently developed influenza may have milder illness and lower risk of medical complications.

Flu vaccine is available at public health centers at no charge to all children under the age of 3 years, and persons aged 3 years and older who:

- do not have health insurance,
- have health insurance that doesn't cover vaccines,
- have health insurance but haven't met their deductible for vaccination coverage, or
- have health insurance but don't know if their health insurance covers vaccines or not.

Both injectable and nasal spray versions of this year's flu vaccine are available while supplies last. For the location of a nearby public health center, visit <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Nursing/Pages/locations.aspx> or contact the Alaska Immunization Helpline at 888-430-4321 or [immune@alaska.gov](mailto:immune@alaska.gov)

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