

Adam Crum
Commissioner

dhss.alaska.gov



Department of Health
and Social Services

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Clinton Bennett, DHSS, (907) 269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov

Flu is currently active in Alaska and cases could rise – it's not too late to vaccinate!

February 25, 2020 ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) is urging all Alaskans aged six months or older to get vaccinated against the flu this year if they haven't already done so.

"It's not too late to vaccinate," said Alaska's State Epidemiologist Dr. Joe McLaughlin. "Getting the flu vaccine greatly reduces your chances of getting the flu and helps prevent more severe cases of the flu. Flu vaccine has been shown to prevent millions of illnesses, tens of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands of deaths in the United States each year. Our goal is to boost our vaccination rates before we see the second wave of seasonal influenza activity that is currently occurring in the Lower 48."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a report last week on the effectiveness of the flu vaccine, [Interim Estimates of 2019-20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness – United States, February 2020](#). The report indicated that this year's flu vaccine has prevented health care visits in about half of those who have been vaccinated.

"The message is simple," added Dr. Zink, Alaska's Chief Medical Officer. "Getting a flu shot helps protect individuals, families and communities. Making sure Alaskans are vaccinated against the flu will also help prevent our medical facilities from having to cope with an influx of flu cases as they are treating patients with other illnesses or preparing for the possibility of COVID-19 cases in Alaska."

There have not been any cases of COVID-19 identified in Alaska. However, similar to health departments in other states, DHSS is working with the CDC and other federal, Tribal, state and local public health partners to prepare and respond to this emerging public health threat.

In addition to getting an annual flu vaccine, please remember these everyday preventive measures to protect against the flu, the common cold and other respiratory diseases including COVID-19.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water; if not available, use hand sanitizer.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- If you're sick, stay home and avoid close contact with others. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.

Additional informational resources:

- CDC: [Influenza \(Flu\)](#)
- DHSS: [Influenza](#)
- DHSS: [Weekly Flu Snapshot](#)
- CDC MMWR Report: [Interim Estimates of 2019–20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness — United States, February 2020](#)

#