



MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sept. 20, 2016

KCHD announces schedule for in-school influenza vaccination program

Knoxville, Tenn. — To reduce the burden of influenza in our community, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) will once again offer in-school influenza vaccinations at some Knox County public schools, private schools and child care centers. The main difference this year is that only the injectable vaccine or “flu shot” will be offered. This decision was based on new evidence that showed a decline in the nasal spray vaccine’s (FluMist) effectiveness over time. The initial phase of the in-school program begins Sept. 26, 2016.

“Evidence shows vaccinating children against the flu not only protects them; it also helps protect the entire community as children are known to be the major transmitter of flu to others,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “Whether parents take part in this program or not, we urge them to have their children vaccinated against the flu, a disease that still kills thousands of Americans every year. The flu shot will soon be available at our three locations, and it’s already widely available elsewhere in the community – at medical providers, pharmacies and Free Flu Shot Saturday on Oct. 1.”

In coordination with Knox County Schools, KCHD collected feedback from parents on how best to proceed with its in-school flu vaccination program given the change to the injectable vaccine. More than 4,000 parents participated in the online survey, and 70 percent indicated that schools were the most convenient location to have their child vaccinated. When asked about days and times outside of school hours, parents indicated they preferred evening and Saturday clinics. Most public elementary school principals declined to have clinics during school hours. Therefore, to offer more options for these students to get vaccinated, KCHD will hold after-hours clinics at its three locations and Saturday clinics at Gibbs and South-Doyle High Schools in October. The high schools were selected based their capacity to host large-scale clinics and for their locations, after reviewing the other options in the community to receive flu vaccine. At the after-hours and weekend clinics, flu vaccinations will be available to the public as well as students.

“I applaud the health department for working with our principals to accommodate their concerns,” said Knox County Schools Interim Superintendent Buzz Thomas. “These are shots, and small children often want their parents when they get a shot. By middle school, that’s all changed.”

No child will be vaccinated without a completed, signed and returned consent form. Parents or guardians may complete the consent form online at knoxcounty.org/health/schoolflu, where they may also download the consent form for printing and view the schedule of the vaccination clinics.

FluMist is an intranasal influenza vaccine that was approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in children as young as 2. Previous data showed that the nasal spray and the injectable vaccine were equally effective. However, in June 2016, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a group of medical and public health experts on the use of vaccines who advise the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), made a recommendation not to use the intranasal or nasal spray flu vaccine during the 2016-2017 flu season due to a decline in effectiveness over time.



For more than 10 years, KCHD has partnered with Knox County Schools, private schools and child care facilities to offer flu vaccination to eligible children in the school setting. On average, KCHD has vaccinated approximately 45 percent of Knox County's school-aged children each year. This program is a national model for community flu prevention.

About Knox County Health Department:

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD's mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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