



MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KCHD seeking parental feedback on its in-school influenza vaccination program

Knoxville, Tenn. — The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is asking parents for feedback on how best to proceed with its in-school flu vaccination program. The organization has decided, based on new evidence, to offer the injectable flu vaccine or flu shot instead of the nasal spray vaccine (FluMist). To gather feedback, KCHD is asking parents to complete a short, online survey available at knoxcounty.org/health by Friday, Aug. 19. The organization will use the feedback to design this year's program.

"To keep vaccination rates high, we know we need to make getting the flu vaccination as easy as possible. For many parents, simply sending their child to school with a consent form is much more convenient than taking time off work and scheduling an appointment," said KCHD Clinical Services Director Dr. Kelly Cooper. "Changing the vaccine from a nasal spray to a shot, however, changes the game a bit. Many parents may want to be present for a shot, for example. So we're exploring offering clinics before school, after school or on the weekends, but we want to make those decisions by partnering with parents."

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.

"It is important to remember this is only a recommendation regarding the nasal spray vaccine; the injectable flu vaccine or flu shot continues to demonstrate effectiveness in preventing flu," added Dr. Cooper. "Our decision to offer only the flu shot is based on this new evidence because we want to offer the most effective option."

For more than 10 years, KCHD has partnered with Knox County elementary and middle schools, private schools, Head Starts, 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. Importantly, evidence supports vaccinating children as a way to protect the entire community from influenza.

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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