



Clark County Health District • Public Information Office • 625 Shadow Lane, Las Vegas, NV 89106 • 385-1291

News Release

Contact: David Tonelli
(702) 383-6320
Jennifer Sizemore
(702) 383-1225

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flu Shots Urged As Complaints of Flu-Like Illness Increase in Clark County

(Las Vegas, Nev., - December 4, 2003) – The number of complaints of flu-like illness continues to increase in Clark County, signaling an early start to the local flu season compared to recent years. More than 8 percent of people visiting local doctors offices last week complained of flu-like symptoms, compared to approximately 2.5 percent in the preceding week. The increase, along with predictions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of a severe flu season, has prompted the health district to urge anyone not yet vaccinated to get their flu shot immediately.

"We strongly recommend everyone over six months of age get their flu vaccine," said Dr. Donald Kwalick, chief health officer. "The health district has given roughly 20-thousand flu immunizations this season, and there is plenty of vaccine still available. There is no reason for anyone to delay or defer getting a flu shot," said Kwalick.

This year's flu vaccine, based on the virus types expected to be circulating, is effective against some current forms of influenza. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have detected a "drift" strain of flu, called the Fujian strain, which differs slightly from one of three covered in the vaccine. Though the vaccine is less effective against the newly-identified strain, it does provide some cross-protection and can minimize the severity of flu illness.

Influenza is a highly-infectious, acute viral infection, which begins with symptoms of fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and usually a cough or other respiratory symptoms. While most people recover without complications, flu can cause serious illness and death, especially in the very young, the elderly and people with chronic disease.

For more information, contact the Clark County Health District Office of Epidemiology at (702) 383-1378.

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