

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Health Update - Flu Shot and FluMist

(Las Vegas, Nev., - November 13, 2003) – FluMist is the trade name for a new vaccine licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration earlier this year, which uses weakened live influenza viruses inhaled via a nasal spray. The standard flu vaccine utilizes dead strains of flu viruses which are injected intramuscularly.

The FluMist nasal spray, like all live-virus vaccines, has some drawbacks, principally an increased risk of contracting a viral illness and a risk of transmitting the live virus to another person. For those reasons, FluMist is only recommended for healthy individuals 5 to 49 years old. FluMist is not recommended for very young children, the elderly or people with weakened immune systems.

“The FluMist vaccine cannot be administered to the people at the highest risk for flu complications,” said Dr. Donald Kwalick, Chief Health Officer. “The flu shot costs less and is appropriate for nearly everyone. For those reasons, it remains the gold standard for protection from influenza,” said Kwalick.

The health district strongly recommends that anyone not yet vaccinated, particularly those at high risk for flu complications, receive the flu shot as soon as possible. High-risk groups include:

- People 65 years of age and older;
- Women in their second or third trimester of pregnancy during flu season;
- People with long-term health problems that suppress the immune system;
- Children 6 to 23 months of age, their household contacts and caregivers.

The health district accepts the following forms of payment for flu shots: Medicare Part B, Medicare Railroad Part B, Medicaid, Secure Horizons and Senior Dimensions. Additionally,

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qualified children 6-23 months old can receive the vaccine free through the Vaccines for Children program. Patients must present their insurance card or Medicaid voucher at the time of service. For those not covered and those without proof of insurance, the cost is \$20.

Flu shots are available at the main health district campus on Shadow Lane and at each of the district's satellite public health centers, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For more information, contact the Clark County Health District at 383-1351.

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