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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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### **Health officials kick off influenza vaccination season**

*It's not too late to vaccinate*

(Anchorage, AK) — Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner Karleen Jackson and other state health officials today joined that jolly old elf himself, Santa Claus, to remind Alaskans that “it’s not too late to get your influenza vaccination.”

Health officials from both the state and municipality of Anchorage gathered at the Mall at Sears to encourage those Alaskans who haven’t already done so to get their flu vaccination. State and municipal public health nurses were on hand to hold a free two-hour flu shot clinic at the mall.

“Last year’s flu season didn’t peak until March,” said Commissioner Jackson, “so it still makes sense to get a flu vaccination before we start the busy holiday season.”

Once a person gets a flu shot, it takes about two weeks to develop immunity against influenza viruses represented in the current season’s vaccine. Influenza vaccination is the single most effective means of preventing influenza virus infection.

This season’s flu vaccine supply should be adequate for Alaska residents wanting to reduce their risk of getting influenza. State, city and federal health officials, however, are encouraging Alaskans to get the vaccine if they are at greater risk for complications from the virus, or if they have close contact with others at risk.

People who will especially benefit from flu vaccination include:

- children 6 months through 4 years;
- adults 50 years or older;
- children and adolescents on long-term aspirin therapy;
- women who are pregnant or could become pregnant during the flu season;

- people with compromised immune systems or chronic health problems, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, HIV infection, and conditions that make breathing difficult, such as asthma;
- residents of nursing homes or chronic care facilities;
- health-care workers; and
- anyone who has contact with those at high risk for complications — particularly anyone who has household contact with babies 6 months or younger, as these infants are too young to receive the flu vaccine.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services began distributing more than 90,000 doses of flu vaccine to health-care providers across the state in September, so there is plenty of vaccine available.

To learn where influenza vaccinations may be found in their area, people can visit the American Lung Association, Alaska Chapter Locator at [www.flucliniclocator.org](http://www.flucliniclocator.org). For additional immunization information, people should call their health-care provider, local public health center, local pharmacy, or the Alaska Immunization Hotline at 269-8088 in Anchorage or 1-888-430-4321. Information for the Alaska Immunization Program also is available on the Web at [www.epi.alaska.gov/immunize](http://www.epi.alaska.gov/immunize). More information about the flu can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>.

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