



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Video message from Directors McElroy and Acton: <https://youtu.be/8fMA-lRmhgs>

Radio/podcast partners: [Download audio clips on this topic from the directors.](#)

State agencies urge older Ohioans and those who spend time with them to avoid getting and spreading the flu

Getting a flu shot is the best protection for yourself and others

Columbus, Ohio – With flu season underway, the Ohio Department of Aging and the Ohio Department of Health urge Ohioans to take steps to avoid getting and spreading the flu. Older adults are at increased risk of complications from the flu. Infections are highly contagious and spread by coughing and contact. By protecting yourself, you are also protecting those around you.

“The best way to avoid the flu is by getting a flu shot,” said Amy Acton, MD, MPH, director of the Ohio Department of Health. “The vaccine can reduce your risk of catching and spreading the flu or reduce the severity of symptoms and length of time you are contagious if you do get sick.”

“If you spend time with older loved ones or work with or around older adults, get a flu shot,” added Ursel J. McElroy, director of the Ohio Department of Aging. “It’s simple: You can’t spread the flu if you don’t get the flu.”

Flu is caused by a virus and can cause mild to severe illness. In some cases, it can lead to death. Flu symptoms may come on quickly and include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

The annual flu shot is covered by Medicare Part B with no copay for adults age 65 or older. Ask your health care provider about a higher-dose vaccine specifically designed for older adults. If a higher-dose vaccine is not available from your health care provider or pharmacy, get the regular-dose shot instead.

To minimize your risk of getting and spreading the flu:

- Get a flu shot - early vaccination offers the best protection against the flu;
- Get plenty of sleep, manage stress, and be as physically active as is appropriate for you;
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious foods;
- Wash your hands frequently, scrubbing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds;
- When you can’t wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands during flu season;
- Avoid contact with people who may have the flu, as well as surfaces they may have touched;
- If you think you may have the flu, limit the time you spend with others until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine;
- Call ahead to doctor’s offices, nursing homes, and senior centers to see if they have special visitation restrictions for those who have flu-like symptoms;
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, throw the tissue away immediately, and wash your hands; and
- If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow then wash any affected skin immediately.

If you get the flu, proper care can lessen symptoms and decrease the time you are ill. It will also lessen the time you are able to infect others. Stay at home and rest. Drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids lost through fever and sweating. Talk to your health care provider about medicines you can take to manage your symptoms and how they may interact with other medicines you take.

Visit www.flu.ohio.gov for information and resources to help you fight the flu.

About ODA – The Ohio Department of Aging serves and advocates for the needs of Ohioans age 60 and older, as well as their families, caregivers and communities. Programs include home and community based long-term supports and services, as well as initiatives to promote health and wellness throughout the lifespan. Visit www.aging.ohio.gov.

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