



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **North Dakota Department of Health Urges Everyone To Get Vaccinated This Flu Season**

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is reminding all North Dakotans of the importance of getting vaccinated against the flu, according to Molly Sander, immunization program manager for the Department of Health.

“There is plenty of flu vaccine this year, so we are urging everyone to get vaccinated to avoid influenza, regardless of age or health status,” Sander said. “Getting vaccinated is the easiest and most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu. Even if you don’t feel the need to be vaccinated to protect yourself, everyone is close to someone who is at high risk for complications due to influenza, so you still should be vaccinated.”

“Influenza is much more serious than a cold. Each year, more than 400 North Dakotans die as a result of complications from influenza and pneumonia and hundreds more are hospitalized,” said Michelle Feist, an epidemiologist with the Department of Health. “In North Dakota, the flu season typically does not peak until after the New Year but can come as soon as the fall, so the best time to get vaccinated is as soon as possible.”

In order to highlight the importance of everyone receiving flu vaccine, Robert Feist – Michelle Feist’s dad – received his flu shot for the first time ever today at the news conference held at Bismarck Burleigh Public Health. He used to refuse to get his flu shot, because “he never gets sick,” but last year he fell ill with influenza and definitely learned his lesson.

“Last year I was really sick for about a week,” Robert Feist said. “Even though I am healthy, I still had a fever of about 105 degrees, cough, sore throat and body aches. My doctor almost admitted me to the hospital. I don’t ever want to get sick with influenza again.”

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The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone age 6 months and older be vaccinated against the flu, especially the following people at high-risk for complications:

- All children ages 6 months through 4 years
- All adults 50 and older
- Residents of long-term care facilities
- People of any age who have long-term health problems, such as:
  - Heart disease.
  - Lung disease.
  - Kidney disease.
  - Diabetes.
  - Asthma.
  - Anemia.
  - Weakened immune systems due to HIV/AIDS and cancer treatments.
  - Breathing problems due to neuromuscular disorders.
- Pregnant women
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- People who are morbidly obese

The flu shot is available to all people age 6 months and older. The nasal flu vaccine is approved for healthy people ages 2 to 49 who are not pregnant.

People who could spread the disease to those at high risk – such as health-care workers, out-of-home caregivers, parents and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months and household contacts – also should be vaccinated.

“Bismarck Burleigh Public Health is prepared to kick-off prevention efforts to control the influenza virus,” said Vonnie Ereth with Bismarck Burleigh Public Health. “We have both the injectable vaccine and the nasal FluMist. Get vaccinated now so that you will be protected when flu season begins.”

Bismarck Burleigh Public Health will be holding a walk-in flu vaccine clinic on Tuesday, Oct. 4, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. and on Friday, Oct. 7, from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m. at 500 East Front Avenue in Bismarck. Additional walk-in clinic dates can be found at [www.bismarck.org/publichealth](http://www.bismarck.org/publichealth).

Clinics are being planned by local public health units across the state and are available from many doctors and pharmacists. Residents are encouraged to contact their local public health unit, doctor or pharmacist for information about vaccine availability in their area.

For more information, contact Molly Sander or Michelle Feist, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378. Information about influenza can be found at [www.ndflu.com](http://www.ndflu.com).

**REMEMBER: A flu vaccine can protect not only you, but everyone around you.**

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