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FLU CASES RISING

Vaccines are still the most effective shield

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Fort Myers, Fla. – Fighting off the flu can have serious family and personal ramifications, but a good defense shield is readily available and still effective—a flu vaccine. The Florida Department of Health in Lee County urges all who haven't received a flu vaccine to get one now.

"Influenza-like illnesses are on the rise in Lee County, as is typical this time of year," said Jennifer Roth, DOH-Lee epidemiologist. "The vaccine takes up to two weeks to be fully effective, so it's urgent people who want protection get it now before illnesses peak, as they usually do, in February."

Flu-like illnesses this fall and winter are lower than they were last year, which is common during warm weather. Now that the weather has cooled off, more people will stay indoors, and more viruses will infect more people, added Roth.

Flu vaccines are free for children 6 months old through 18 years old at the department's Immunization clinic, 3920 Michigan Avenue, Fort Myers. Clinic hours are 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 1-3:30 p.m. Friday. Appointments are available by calling 239-461-6100. Flu vaccine for adults is \$30 -\$50. Local health care providers and pharmacies also provide flu vaccine.

The flu vaccine changes annually, so all must receive the new vaccine every year.

For information about the department go to <http://lee.floridahealth.gov/>

About the Florida Department of Health

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