



# News Release

**For immediate release:** February 1, 2011

(11-015)

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## **Flu's usual peak time of year is here; there's still time to get vaccinated**

*Getting vaccinated protects you and helps build community immunity*

**OLYMPIA** — Flu usually peaks in Washington in February or March, so now's a great time for people to get flu vaccine if they haven't yet this winter. Vaccine prevents flu, but it doesn't treat the illness once someone gets sick. That means it's important to get vaccinated before flu cases rise in our state.

"Flu is a serious disease, but sometimes it's not taken seriously," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "Getting vaccinated will help lower your risk of getting flu and spreading it to others."

Anyone can get the flu, even healthy kids and adults. The flu is unpredictable. It spreads quickly and easily. People shouldn't delay getting flu vaccine until someone they know gets sick. The more people get vaccinated against the flu, the less likely flu can spread through the community.

People can spread flu to others before they even know they're sick, and can continue to spread it for five to seven days after getting sick. The best ways to protect yourself and others from flu are to get vaccinated and to practice good health manners — wash your hands, cover your cough, and stay home when you're sick.

Each year in our country, about 20,000 kids under age 5 are hospitalized with flu or flu-related illnesses that could have been prevented. Some people aren't able to be vaccinated against flu — for example, babies under 6 months — and they rely on families and communities to get vaccinated to help protect them from the disease. Kids under 9 may need two doses of flu vaccine about a month apart for best protection. Parents should check with their doctor, nurse, or medical clinic about how many doses their children should have.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that everyone age 6 months and older get a yearly flu shot. Vaccination is especially important for babies, young kids, pregnant

— More —

women, anyone over 50, and people with certain medical conditions like diabetes, asthma, and heart disease.

The state's "WashYourHandsingTon" flu prevention radio campaign runs through February. It highlights the importance of getting a yearly flu vaccination and using good health behaviors.

[The radio jingle and YouTube video](http://www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/handsington.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/handsington.htm), along with other materials, can be found online. People can help spread the word about preventing the flu by sharing the video through e-mail, Twitter and Facebook.

To find an immunization clinic, call your health care provider, use the Department of Health [Flu News website](http://www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/default.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/FluNews/default.htm), or call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588. The [Flu Vaccine Finder](http://www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/influenza/flu-vaccine-finder/) is also a good resource (www.lungusa.org/lung-disease/influenza/flu-vaccine-finder/).

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for *a healthy dose of information*.