



## News Release

Arkansas Department of Health & Arkansas Pharmacists  
Association

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### **Health Department and Pharmacists Urge Arkansans to get a Flu Shot During National Influenza Vaccination Week**

**LITTLE ROCK, AR (Dec. 9, 2013)** – The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and the Arkansas Pharmacists Association (APA) urge unvaccinated people to get their flu shots during National Influenza Vaccination Week, December 9-13.

According to ADH's Comprehensive Influenza Report and data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) FluView surveillance, the number of reported influenza cases increased greatly during the 2012-2013 influenza season. ADH's Jennifer Dillaha, M.D., Medical Director for Immunizations, said, "Arkansas's 2011-2012 influenza season was the worst flu season in over 30 years. During last year's flu season, we had a higher rate of flu-related deaths in children than any state in the nation."

Dr. Nate Smith, Director and State Health Officer, said, "Getting an annual flu vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and your family against the flu." Certain people are at risk for serious complications if they get the flu. This includes older adults, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people who live in facilities like nursing homes.

The vaccine takes about two weeks to provide full protection.

## National Influenza Vaccination Week 2013

“It’s not too late to get a flu shot,” added Dr. Eric Crumbaugh, Immunization Coordinator for the Arkansas Pharmacists Association. “Patients who still need a flu shot should talk to their doctor, visit an ADH local health unit or other health care provider such as their pharmacist. Most pharmacies have plenty of vaccine available and there is no appointment needed.”

According to the CDC, seasonal influenza is a highly contagious virus that is spread when people are in close contact with one another. It is important to protect adults and the children that they care for. The virus can cause a mild to severe illness, and can even lead to death.

These flu vaccines have an excellent safety record. The flu vaccine cannot give you the flu. Some people may have a mild reaction to the flu vaccine. Reactions to the flu shot might include mild soreness and redness near the site of the shot and perhaps a little fever or slight headache. Side effects to the nasal spray vaccine may include runny nose, headache, and wheezing.

There are very few medical reasons to avoid the flu vaccine. They include a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of the flu, or a history of Guillain-Barre syndrome. People with a non-life threatening egg allergy may be vaccinated with a new egg-free vaccine.

Flu symptoms include fever over 100 degrees, headache, extreme fatigue, sore throat, muscle aches, dry cough, runny or stuffy nose, and occasionally stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

The flu virus is spread through coughing or sneezing and by touching a hard surface with the virus on it and then touching the nose or mouth. Those infected by the influenza virus are contagious to others even before they develop symptoms. The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each year.

## National Influenza Vaccination Week 2013

For more information, go to [www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov) or [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

*The Arkansas Pharmacists Association, founded in 1882, is the statewide professional association representing approximately 2,200 pharmacists in Arkansas. APA strives to further the professional advancement of pharmacists, advocate the value of pharmacy, and safeguard the health and well-being of every Arkansan. Its mission is to advance a professional and business environment for Arkansas pharmacists to be successful and fulfilled in serving patients.*

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