



MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF
BUDGET & MANAGEMENT

MARTIN O'MALLEY
Governor

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Lieutenant Governor

T. ELOISE FOSTER
Secretary

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Deputy Secretary

September 27, 2013

Dear State Employee:

As the new flu season approaches, we are writing to you with some important related health information for you and your family. As you might know, each year hundreds of thousands of Marylanders “catch the flu.” Although most people feel better in a week or so, some develop serious complications that require hospitalization, and some even die. Anyone, even healthy people, can get the flu, and anyone who gets the flu could spread it to other people including family members, friends, co-workers, and others. Influenza is easily spread through coughs and sneezes from someone who has it. Covering your cough and washing your hands frequently are important steps to reduce the spread of illness.

But the best way to protect yourself, your family, your co-workers, and your community is by getting vaccinated.

We are pleased that Governor O'Malley and the Maryland Department of Budget and Management have continued to work hard to make sure that all health insurance plans offered to state employees cover influenza vaccination without charge. We urge all employees to see their doctors or nurse practitioners and take advantage of this benefit.

We realize that some people might still not get vaccinated against the flu because they have heard stories about the flu virus or vaccine that simply aren't true. Here are a few of the biggest myths:

Myth #1: The flu vaccine gives you the flu.

THE TRUTH: The vaccine cannot give you the flu. It is made from a very weak or dead version of the flu virus. Some people may feel like they are getting sick after being vaccinated but it is just the body adjusting to the vaccine. Other people who get vaccinated may catch a cold or the flu before the flu vaccine starts working. It takes a couple of weeks for the vaccine to work. That is why you should get vaccinated right away.

Myth #2: Healthy people do not get the flu.

THE TRUTH: Anyone can catch the flu. Although young infants, people over 65, people with chronic health conditions, and pregnant women tend to get sicker from the flu, everyone is at risk. Thousands of healthy people miss time from work and school every year because of the flu. Many of them end up in the hospital. And healthy people can spread the virus to family

~Effective Resource Management~

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members and others who might have health conditions that increase their risk of serious problems if they get the flu.

Myth #3: State employees' health insurance does not cover flu vaccinations.

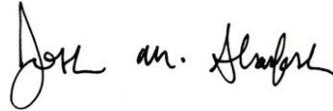
THE TRUTH: Since July 1, 2011, flu vaccination has been covered for all State employees enrolled in a state health plan with no copayment if the vaccination is provided by your in-network provider during a routine well visit, such as your annual physical. If your doctor vaccinates you while you are in the office for an illness, the usual office visit copay will apply. More information about influenza vaccination coverage, as well as other health benefit plan changes is available at <http://dbm.maryland.gov/benefits/Documents/BenefitsGuideSPY13.pdf>

Thank you for considering getting vaccinated and protecting yourself, your friends, and family now. Together, we can reduce the spread of flu in Maryland.

Sincerely,



T. Eloise Foster
Secretary
Department of Budget and Management



Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D.
Secretary
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene