

AI/AN Matte

CDC: 2011-2012 Flu Season

Word count: 411

Gather together this season and prevent flu.

Winter is a special time for family and community. It is time to gather for feasts and celebration. It is time for sharing laughter, wisdom, and tradition – not a time for sharing the flu.

Compared to the general U.S. population, American Indians and Alaskan Natives are more likely than other groups to get sicker from the flu, be hospitalized and even die from flu-related complications. In fact, in 2010, American Indians and Alaskan Natives were added to the list of people for whom yearly influenza vaccination is a priority. Protect yourself, your family, and your community by getting your flu vaccine. You need *this* season's vaccine to protect against flu *this* season, so get vaccinated this season, even if you were vaccinated last season.

The flu has the potential to cause severe illness that may require hospital care, even in otherwise-healthy adults and children. Getting a flu vaccine each season reduces your risk of illness, hospitalization, or even death and can prevent you from spreading the virus to your loved ones. A flu vaccine can offer life-saving protection, especially in communities that do not have a hospital with an emergency department or Intensive Care Unit (ICU) to treat patients with severe flu illness or related complications.

The flu vaccine is safe and is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. The flu vaccine is the best way modern medicine currently has to protect against this serious disease. Anyone can get sick from the flu, but it causes more problems for babies and young children, elders, pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions, like diabetes (type 1 and 2), asthma or heart problems.

There are lots of places to get the flu vaccine. You can get yours from trusted sources including your tribal health system, Indian Health Service (IHS), or Public Health Nurse. You even can get a flu vaccine at some local grocery stores and pharmacies. You can get more information about getting the flu vaccine from your doctor or community health nurse.

Protecting your community against the flu is a shared responsibility. Start a new tradition as you gather together this season. Get vaccinated!

For more information about flu and the flu vaccine call your state health department, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or visit CDC on the web at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>. For free posters for American Indian and Alaskan Native communities, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print.htm>.

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