



November 30, 2018

Dear Healthcare Professional,

During the 2017-2018 season, Iowa experienced a more than 50 percent increase in the reported rate of hospitalizations due to influenza, and 272 reported flu-related deaths. Despite variations in vaccine efficacy from year to year, the flu vaccine remains our most critical tool for preventing influenza-related morbidity and mortality.

Flu activity in Iowa is currently at the sporadic level; however, we anticipate that it will increase in the coming months.

Right now is the ideal time to encourage all Iowans to take advantage of flu vaccination as a vital preventive tool.

Despite dangerously sharp increases in infection and hospitalization rates, **only 43 percent of adults in Iowa received the vaccine last year.** Seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for everyone over age 6 months, and **like many illnesses, the very young, the elderly, pregnant women and immunocompromised individuals are more vulnerable to becoming seriously ill with the flu.**

It is crucial that we vaccinate not only these populations, but also those who interact with them in health and other primary care settings. **Last year there were 180 flu-related pediatric deaths nationwide, 80 percent of whom were not vaccinated.**

Unfortunately, many misperceptions about the vaccine continue to persist, including the incorrect belief by over half of U.S. parents that a child can get the flu from a flu shot.

Each year, the Iowa Department of Public Health works with partners like you to prepare for the influenza season between late fall and early spring. **Please join me in encouraging all Iowans to get their flu shots this season, and thank you so much for all you do to protect and improve the public's health!**

Sincerely,

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