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## **National Influenza Vaccination Week Provides Opportunities for Vaccination**

Local health departments across the state will offer influenza vaccination clinics next week during National Influenza Vaccination Week (NIVW). Many health departments have seasonal flu vaccine and all health departments have H1N1 vaccine. A full clinic schedule for all counties across West Virginia is posted on the state's flu website at [www.wvflu.org](http://www.wvflu.org).

Vaccines are also available through many commercial pharmacies and private providers.

State Health Officer Dr. Cathy Slemp, who is leading the fight against H1N1 in West Virginia said, "All flu is serious. National Influenza Vaccination Week serves as a good reminder to all of us that influenza vaccination is an important tool in protecting ourselves and the ones we love from flu and its complications." She noted, "Millions of doses of both seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccine have been safely administered in-state and across the country. If you have not already been vaccinated, now is a great time to do so."

Besides time lost from work and school, seasonal flu is responsible for an average of 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths annually in the U.S. That corresponds to approximately 1100 hospitalizations and 200 deaths in West Virginia. H1N1 is still circulating throughout the state and according to the CDC, has already affected 1 in 6 Americans. While most all flu surveillance underestimates impact, there have been at least 895 hospitalizations and 20 deaths attributed to H1N1 in West Virginia to date.

NIVW is a national observance established to highlight the importance of continuing influenza vaccination, as well as foster greater use of flu vaccine after the holiday season into January and beyond.

One of the many goals for NIVW is to engage at-risk audiences who are not yet vaccinated, hesitant about vaccination or unsure about where to get vaccinated. More information about National Influenza Vaccination Week is available at [www.wvflu.org](http://www.wvflu.org).