

Outsmarting the Flu Bug: Tips for Washingtonians

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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SEATTLE - Here's a New Year's resolution that takes only a few minutes: Get a flu shot. Flu season has arrived, and

Michelle Roberts, a health promotion manager with the Washington Department of Health, says there's plenty of vacc

"Now's a really good time, because we're just starting to see disease start to pick up - flu disease. There's definitely b

Roberts says most of the state's cases so far have been reported in central Washington. Roberts says children under age 9 who are getting their first flu vaccine will need two doses.

Health professionals learned a lot from the H1N1 scare, Roberts explains. Flu shots used to be recommended only for young children, people over age 65 or those with chronic health conditions. However, this year's recommendation from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is for annual flu vaccinations for everyone over six months of age, she adds.

"One of the lessons we learned is that even healthy people can get the flu. Often, we think about people who are going to have the most severe side effects as being the very young and especially the very elderly. But H1N1 was different. We saw really healthy adults and healthy teenagers getting severely sick - and dying - from H1N1."

In anticipation of this flu season, the state Health Department has begun a campaign called "WashYourHandsington." Roberts calls it a lighthearted way to get a serious message across.

"'WashYourHandsington' talks about the state where everyone washes their hands, covers their coughs and gets a flu vaccine. It's just a fun approach to get people's attention, and to remind them that flu is serious and getting vaccinated is a simple thing they can do to stay healthy."

In the last flu season, almost 42,000 people were hospitalized nationwide and more than 2,100 deaths were attributed to the H1N1 virus.