



Governor Bill Richardson Directs NM Secretary of Health to Amend Public Health Order and Expand Access to Flu Vaccine

Every New Mexican can now receive flu protection

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SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson today directed New Mexico Secretary of Health Michelle Lujan Grisham to expand access to available doses of flu vaccine. The modified order will now allow healthy people 50 and over and healthy children aged 2-5 to get flu shots, which had previously been restricted to seniors over 65 and others defined as high-risk of developing potentially serious complications from the flu. In addition, the amended order allows people aged 5 to 49 to get the FluMist nasal vaccine.

“Every New Mexican now has the opportunity to protect themselves from the flu, either through flu shots or the nasal vaccine,” said Governor Richardson. “We believe we now have enough vaccine to treat our most at-risk citizens, which has always been our priority. And because of Secretary Grisham’s quick action to gain control of available vaccine when the shortage was announced, and her department’s aggressive efforts to obtain additional supplies, we can now give more New Mexicans the opportunity to get a flu shot.”

The Health Department will continue to emphasize that people aged 18 to 64 with chronic conditions need to be vaccinated against the flu.

“My deepest concern is still for those individuals with chronic health conditions - those are the people we really need to get vaccinated,” said Michelle Lujan Grisham, Secretary of Health. “I want to encourage anyone who falls in the high-risk categories to get a flu shot as soon as possible. The Health Department will hold some vaccine in reserve so that these individuals can still get a shot.”

The amended order states that shots will be provided to the following people:

- Adults and children with heart disease, asthma, or other chronic lung diseases.
- Adults and children who required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of diabetes, kidney disease, blood disorders, metabolic disorders, weak immune systems, including HIV/AIDS, and other chronic diseases.
- Children, ages six months to 18 years, who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- People 50 years of age and older.
- Children ages six months to 5 years old. (Children under six months cannot medically be vaccinated against the flu. Children 2 to 5 can be vaccinated if recommended by a health care provider.)
- Out of home caregivers, and household contacts of persons in high-risk groups, including the parents of children under the age of 2.
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.
- Pregnant women; vaccination can occur in any trimester.
- Healthcare workers who provide direct care to patients.
- Healthy people ages 5 to 49 can now receive FluMist, a nasal vaccine rather than one that is injected.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced Oct. 5 that Chiron Corp. would not be providing about 50 million doses of flu vaccine because of contamination issues. This amounted to half the vaccine the United States was expecting for the upcoming flu season. The other 55 million doses, produced by Aventis Pasteur, were unaffected by this problem.

Despite the shortage, New Mexico has been able to obtain vaccine from various sources. As of Dec. 10, the state has received 479,620 doses of adult and children's vaccine. Public and private health providers have reported to the Department of Health that vaccine is available around the state.

People who have medical providers should contact them about vaccine availability in their area. People without healthcare providers, health insurance, or who cannot get information from their provider can contact a public health office. To find the number of a public health office, call 800-432-6866 or go to www.health.state.nm.us.