



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Thursday, October 9, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: Heads Of Executive Departments And Agencies

FROM: Katherine Archuleta Director

Subject: Keeping Our Federal Workers Healthy this Flu Season and Beyond

The flu season is quickly approaching. Unfortunately, Americans lose as many as 17 million workdays each year to influenza-related illness. An annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect against influenza, avoiding illness that can sometimes be severe enough to lead to hospitalization and even death. You can help us ensure all federal employees take action to reduce the spread of influenza in the workplace, among our families, and in our communities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months get an annual flu vaccine. However, according to CDC, only 39 percent of adults were vaccinated last year by early flu season. To help make immunization more accessible, many federal agencies offer flu shots onsite at no or low cost. Employees can also receive this vaccine at no cost through their health plan. Most FEHB plans cover flu shots at pharmacies and retail stores in addition to doctor's offices and clinics. As a plus, the whole family can be immunized at these locations. Furthermore, with the prevention focus of the Affordable Care Act, many more Americans have insurance coverage for common vaccines.

Along with promoting immunization, please reinforce with your managers and employees that we can minimize the spread of infection in the workplace. Plan now for possible illnesses and:

- *Encourage frequent hand washing and proper etiquette for coughs and sneezes;*
- *Reassure employees that it is best to stay home if they develop symptoms of the flu;*
- *Direct supervisors to review telework, flexible work schedules, and leave options that may be available to employees;*
- *Update employee contact information;*
- *Refresh emergency plans to ensure continuity of operations; and*
- *Know your agency's contingency role in a severe flu outbreak.*

Everyone can benefit from updating their immunizations. Vaccines not only prevent disease in the people who receive them but also help create "community immunity," so even unvaccinated individuals are at lower risk of disease. Please invite your employees to take the adult vaccination quiz to learn more about the vaccines they need. Urge them to talk to their healthcare provider to ensure they are up to date with the vaccines that are recommended for them.

Please share the important resources on [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), [flu.gov](https://www.flu.gov), and [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) with your employees to help ensure a healthier workforce through timely immunization as well as respond effectively to a potential flu outbreak. For information about pandemic response and emergency planning go to www.opm.gov or [telework.gov](https://www.telework.gov). Thank you for all your efforts on behalf of our employees and the American people.