

Mayor Scott Avedisian announced that the city's Department of Human Services, with support from the state Department of Health, will be able to provide any uninsured and/or underinsured resident 19 years or older with a free seasonal flu vaccine.

Qualified residents without insurance who are interested in getting the vaccine or would like more information should call Pat Seltzer RN, the community wellness nurse, at 468-4077.

As in past years, flu clinics are also being offered at the Buttonwoods and Pilgrim Senior Centers for the general adult public.

Residents are asked to bring their insurance cards with them. The schedule is as follows:

Friday, October 15 – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Pilgrim Senior Center, 27 Pilgrim Parkway  
Monday, October 18 – 4 to 7 p.m., Buttonwoods Community Center, 3027 West Shore Road  
Wednesday, October 20 – 8 a.m. to noon, Pilgrim  
Tuesday, November 9 – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Pilgrim  
Monday, November 16 – 9 a.m. to noon, Buttonwoods

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season. There are two types of flu vaccines: the "flu shot"—an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The seasonal flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women and the nasal-spray flu vaccine—a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu that is approved for use in healthy\* people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three influenza viruses that research suggests will be most common. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against 2009 H1N1, and two other influenza viruses (an H3N2 virus and an influenza B virus).

Earlier this year, vaccine experts voted that everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year starting with the 2010-2011 influenza season. While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that certain people get vaccinated either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications.

Those who are at high risk for developing flu-related complications include: children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old; adults 65 years of age and older; pregnant women, and people who have medical conditions, including asthma; neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions; chronic lung disease; heart disease; blood disorders; endocrine disorder; kidney disorders; liver disorders; metabolic disorders; weakened immune system due to disease or medication; people younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy; and people who are morbidly obese (Body Mass Index [BMI] of 40 or

greater).

Other people for whom vaccination is especially important are: People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities; People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including: health care workers; household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu; household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 5 years of age, with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children younger than 6 months of age (children younger than 6 months are at highest risk of flu-related complications but are too young to get vaccinated).

Also, last flu season, American Indians and Alaskan Natives seemed to be at higher risk of flu complications.