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Alberta's influenza immunization program begins tomorrow

EDMONTON – Starting tomorrow, Tuesday, Oct. 20, Albertans will have the opportunity to protect themselves and others against influenza with the launch of Alberta's annual influenza immunization program.

The program makes vaccine available free of charge to all Albertans six months of age and older at hundreds of Alberta Health Services (AHS) public influenza immunization clinics, as well as at pharmacist and physician offices around the province.

"Influenza arrives every fall, and chances are, you will be exposed," says Dr. Chris Sikora, a Medical Officer of Health with AHS in Edmonton Zone. "You may be healthy now but keep in mind: good health isn't contagious. Influenza is. To protect your health, get immunized."

Immunization is the most effective means of protecting against the strains of influenza virus expected to circulate this season. Because those strains change from season to season, Albertans are reminded that they cannot rely on having been immunized in years past.

"It's pretty simple: to be protected this season you need to be immunized this season," says Dr. Sikora. "Without immunization, you're at risk."

That risk is not something to be underestimated. Last season, more than 1,870 Albertans were hospitalized due to influenza, and for 103 Albertans it was fatal. Thousands more suffered from the illness and put those around them at risk of contracting influenza as well.

"Chances are your friends and family don't want influenza any more than you do," says Dr. Sikora. "Don't take that chance. Get immunized."

For more information, including local clinic schedules, Albertans can visit www.ahs.ca/influenza or call Health Link at 811.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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