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Influenza immunization program begins Monday

RED DEER – Starting Monday (October 24), Albertans will have the opportunity to protect themselves and others against influenza through Alberta's annual influenza immunization program.

Offering influenza immunization, free of charge, to all Albertans six months of age and older, Alberta's program will make vaccine available at hundreds of Alberta Health Services (AHS) public influenza immunization clinics – as well as some pharmacists and physician offices – around the province.

"We are already seeing cases of influenza in Alberta," says Dr. Digby Horne. "You may be healthy now, but without immunization, everyone is at risk. Prevention is your only protection."

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

"Last season, influenza immunization cut Albertans' risk for influenza in half. That's great, but last year's immunization won't protect you this season. You need this season's immunization to be protected," says Dr. Horne.

In six months alone last season, more than 1,600 Albertans were hospitalized with influenza, and 62 Albertans died. Influenza causes more emergency department visits than heart attacks and strokes, and hospitalizes more children than poisonings.

"Influenza does not discriminate," reminds Dr. Horne. "Though some Albertans are at greater risk of severe complications, no one is immune to its potentially severe impact. Please don't take that risk."

"For yourself, and your loved ones, get immunized."

Find 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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