



During the last flu season, the Arkansas Department of Health recorded more than 15,000 positive influenza tests. Of those, 62 patients lost their lives as a direct result.

Each year in the United States, 25-50 million infections are reported, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and 23,600 die due to seasonal flu.

With flu season just around the corner, we want to remind you of the importance of the flu vaccine and how readily available it is to all Arkansans.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. 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 vaccine takes one to two weeks to start working and is 70 to 90 percent effective in preventing the seasonal flu.

The Arkansas Department of Health has taken an aggressive approach to ensure the vaccine is available to everyone. Mass clinics are being held in every region of the state. Several of the clinics have already begun.

In the coming days, the department will be visiting school districts in the state offering the vaccine. Parents will need to fill out the appropriate paperwork.

The flu shot is not required for children to attend school, but it is highly recommended.

If you have insurance, ADH will ask your insurance company to pay for the cost of giving the vaccine. If you do not have insurance or your insurance does not pay for vaccines, there will still be no charge to you.

Following the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, only the injectable form of the flu vaccine will be available at all flu clinics in the state this year including school clinics. There will be no nasal mist vaccine available.

For extra safety, people you live with or spend a lot of time with should also get a flu vaccine. You are less likely to get the flu if the people around you don't have it.

For a complete list of clinics in your area visit [www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov).