

# Risk Communication Toolkit for Seasonal Influenza



Developed for Oregon Local Health Departments by the  
Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division  
Health Security, Preparedness, and Response Program

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Risk Communication Toolkit for Seasonal Influenza has been designed to assist with messaging before and during the influenza season. The most likely health impacts from a seasonal influenza include the following:

- Widespread respiratory illness
- Increased absenteeism at work and school
- Increased hospitalizations of older individuals, those with chronic health conditions or compromised immune systems

To use the communication materials included in this Toolkit most efficiently and effectively, you will need the following items from your county's or tribe's communication plan:

- Media Contact List
- Local Partners Contact List
- Special Populations List
- Policies for Clearance
- Policies for Disseminating Messages

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION SEASONAL INFLUENZA**

Influenza is caused by a virus spread person-to-person, through the air and on hard surfaces in droplets from sneezes and coughs. Illness from the flu can last for 10 days or more. Symptoms include sore throat, coughing, runny nose, congestion, fever, muscle aches and headache. For some people, the flu can be a very serious, even deadly disease, which could lead to secondary infections such as pneumonia. Over a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2006, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people.

In Oregon, the influenza season usually peaks in January to March. Every flu season is different, and influenza can affect people differently. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.

### **Signs and symptoms of flu**

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

## KEY RESOURCES FOR COMMUNICATING ABOUT SEASONAL INFLUENZA

### Flu season updates

- For the latest in Oregon flu activity, read [FluBites](#).

### Oregon Flu communications toolkit

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/preventionwellness/vaccinesimmunization/immunizationproviderresources/pages/flutoolkit.aspx>

The Oregon Immunization Program developed the flu communications toolkit focused on the following audiences:

- [Businesses and employers \(pdf\)](#)
- [Prenatal health care providers \(pdf\)](#)
- [Health care workers flu vaccination \(pdf\)](#)
- [Oregon flu prevention \(pdf\)](#)

### Available flyers

- [Don't miss work because of flu \(pdf\)](#)
- [Fight the flu \(pdf\)](#)
- [A delicate balance \(pdf\)](#)
- [Flu shot clinic poster for faith-based organizations \(pdf\)](#)
- [Template for health care worker flu immunization clinic \(.dotx\)](#)

### CDC Flu Communications toolkit for 2014-2015

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/index.htm>

- What you should know
- Influenza basics
- Prevention: Flu Vaccine
- Treatment: Antiviral drugs
- Resources for health professionals and flu prevention partners

## TALKING POINTS FOR SEASONAL INFLUENZA

### **The best defense against influenza is vaccination.**

Vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older.

It's particularly important for children aged 6 months and older, pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions and health care workers to be immunized against the flu.

### **Find vaccine**

Flu vaccine is available from health care providers, local health departments, and many pharmacies (for people 11 and older). Some pharmacies can also immunize children under 11 with a prescription.

To locate a flu vaccine near you, visit [flu.oregon.gov](http://flu.oregon.gov) to use our flu vaccine locator, or call 211 (toll free).

### **Tips for staying healthy**

In addition to vaccination, these preventive measures can help stop flu and other diseases from circulating:

- Cover your cough and sneeze.
- Wash your hands often. Use soap and warm water.
- Stay home when you're sick. Protect others at school and work by staying home at least 24-hours after your fever (100+ degrees) subsides (subsides without fever reducing medicines).
- Take antiviral medications if prescribed.
- Clean surfaces. Flu germs can live for hours on hard surfaces. Make sure your home and workspace are wiped down frequently, especially where children are playing.

**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #1 FOR SEASONAL INFLUENZA**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: [Name]  
[County] Health Department  
Phone [(XXX) XXX-XXXX]  
Email [email address]

**[Agency]** The best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year.

*Residents are advised to get vaccinated, wash hands, cover coughs and sneezes, and stay home when sick.*

[CITY NAME, OREGON] – Health officials recommend getting the flu vaccine to prevent the spread of illness in [County]. Flu is not just a major headache; it can be deadly for vulnerable populations. While a healthy person could experience flu as a mild annoyance, that same person can pass the virus on to an unhealthy person, resulting in hospitalizations for numerous people with perilous results.

“Getting vaccinated is the most effective way to prevent the spread of flu,” said XXXX, title here. “Everyone 6 months and older should be vaccinated annually to prevent illness in themselves and others.”

Although the best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated, there are other effective actions to fight the flu:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Stay home when sick.

When more people get vaccinated against the flu, less flu can spread through the community. [provide link to local clinics]

**Additional resources**

Flu In Oregon webpage

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/FluPrevention/Pages/FluInOregon.aspx>

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**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE #2 FOR SEASONAL INFLUENZA**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT: [Name]  
[County] Health Department  
Phone [(XXX) XXX-XXXX]  
Email [email address]

**[Agency] Flu season is in full swing in [County].**

*Residents are advised to get vaccinated, wash hands, cover coughs and sneezes, and stay home when sick.*

**[CITY NAME, OREGON]** – **XX** people have gotten sick with the flu in **[County]** this week. [Insert more statistics available]

“It’s not too late to get vaccinated. Getting a flu vaccine is the most effective way to prevent the flu, but it doesn’t stop there,” said XXXX, enter title here. “[Oregonians] can prevent the spread of flu by staying home when sick, washing hands, and covering coughs and sneezes.”

Although the best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated, there are other effective actions to fight the flu:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Stay home when sick.

When more people get vaccinated against the flu, less flu can spread through the community. **[provide link to local clinics]**

**Additional resources**

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<http://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/FluPrevention/Pages/FluInOregon.aspx>

# #

## **SEASONAL INFLUENZA PRINTABLE MATERIALS**

The following websites contain printable flu materials that are available for download from CDC.

### **General Public**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-general.htm>

### **Parents**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-family.htm>

### **Vulnerable Populations**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-highrisk.htm>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-pregnant.htm>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-seniors.htm>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-native.htm>

### **For Businesses/Employers**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-businesses.htm>

### **Health Care Workers**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-healthcare.htm>

### **Spanish Language**

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/print-spanish.htm>

## **SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES FOR SEASONAL INFLUENZA**

### **Twitter Messages and Facebook posts**

Retweeting and reposting from the Oregon Immunization Program social media accounts will make sure you are sharing the latest information with your community:

#### **Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/OregonImmunize>

#### **Twitter**

<https://twitter.com/OregonImmunize>

*Personalize your agency's social media messages:*

- Highlight local clinics
- Share photos of staff or partners who have recently receive their flu shot
- Start a photo sharing contest with photos from people who have received their shot

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