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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 22, 2016

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**City of Milwaukee Health Department Cautions: ‘Don’t Bring the Flu Home for the Holidays’**

*Health officials issue reminder that it’s not too late to get vaccinated*

MILWAUKEE – With the holidays just around the corner, the City of Milwaukee Health Department is reminding area residents that it’s not too late to get a flu vaccine.

“Flu season is officially here,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “To protect yourself, your family and those around you, I urge everyone over 6 months of age to get vaccinated now. Even healthy people can get the flu and spread it to others, especially this time of year when we gather with family and friends.”

Influenza (the flu) is among the most common respiratory illnesses in the United States, infecting millions of people each year. The virus is spread through the air when someone who is sick coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Symptoms of seasonal flu include fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, and fatigue.

Though common, the flu can be serious, resulting in approximately 200,000 hospitalizations and thousands of deaths each year. Those most vulnerable to serious complications include infants and young children, the elderly, pregnant women and those with chronic illnesses.

“Flu season is unpredictable,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “Every year different strains of the virus can spread, that is why the single best way to protect yourself and your family is to get vaccinated each year.”

The flu vaccine is recommended for all individuals over 6 months of age, especially those at greatest risk for serious complications including adults 65 and older, children younger than 5, and pregnant women, and those who are in contact with those at greatest risk.

“Even if you think you are healthy and can beat the flu, you may spread it to someone else who is more vulnerable,” added Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “By getting your own flu shot, you are giving your family and friends a better shot at staying healthy all season long.”

This year’s flu vaccine protects against four strains of influenza virus. The vaccine can not only help to prevent you from getting sick, but can make your illness milder if you do get sick and help prevent you from spreading the flu to others.

Along with getting your vaccine, the City of Milwaukee Health Department encourages frequent hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes with your sleeve to reduce the spread of the flu, as well as other viruses that circulate during the winter months. Those experiencing symptoms should remain home from work or school, get rest, and drink plenty of fluids.

**Flu vaccines are widely available through local health care providers and retail pharmacies. To find a location closest to you, use the flu vaccine finder at [Milwaukee.gov/health](http://Milwaukee.gov/health).**

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*Think Health. Act Now!*

