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# Dept. of Health to Virgin Islanders: Get Your Flu Shots, Stay Healthy

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## A nurse administers a flu shot By. DAVID GOLDMAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The 2019-2020 flu season is well underway nationally and territorially, and the Virgin Islands Department of Health is encouraging all Virgin Islanders to keep the vaccine between you and the disease by getting a flu shot this flu season.

D.O.H. said residents should get the flu vaccine to protect against illness and help prevent the spread of seasonal flu to others. It has never been easier, and it's never too late to get your flu shot, according to the department.

"I would like to remind our community that our influenza season usually follows a delayed onset compared to the continental US, however this year we have observed an early increase of cases,"

said Territorial Infectious Disease Specialist, Dr. Tai Hunte-Ceasar. "Everyone must take flu seriously and protect themselves and others by ensuring that all eligible family members are vaccinated."

D.O.H. said getting the flu shot can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations. Receiving your flu vaccination when you are healthy helps to prevent illness in the most vulnerable populations as well. People at higher risk for flu-related complications include children ages newborn to 5, adults over the age of 65, pregnant women and people who have existing medical conditions such as asthma, according to D.O.H.

The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months old and older, including pregnant women. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection against the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends people get injectable flu shots.

"It is also essential to practice good hygiene by properly and frequently washing your hands to help prevent the spread of seasonal flu. Make it a habit to clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces in your home, school or office. You can take additional steps to ward off the flu by coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and avoiding touching your face," said D.O.H.

Check with your physician or D.O.H.'s Maternal Child Health Clinics for children's vaccines and the Community Health Clinics for adults. To contact D.O.H. Community Health Clinics call 340-718-1311 ext. 3895 (St. Croix) or 340-774-7477 (St. Thomas).