

Seniors Urged to Prepare Early for Winter Weather

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) 2011 U.S. winter forecast calls for a typical La Niña winter over the U.S.--warm and dry over the Southern Plains, cool and wet over the Pacific Northwest, and wetter than average over the Ohio Valley.

The Franklin County Office on Aging issues its annual winter announcement to seniors urging them to take preventive measures and plan early for winter weather. Learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your state and local government and ensure your home and car are prepared for the winter weather.

FEMA recommends you prepare an emergency supply kit, develop a family communications plan with up to date contacts and stay informed about the risks and weather emergencies in your community.

An emergency supply kit should include a three-day supply of food and water, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights and batteries, prescription medicines and copies of prescriptions and adequate clothing and blankets. To guarantee an uninterrupted supply of prescription medicines, contact your pharmacy today and find out if they have a free home-delivery or mail order service. If this option is available, consider subscribing or enrolling now to ensure a continuous supply in your home.

Getting the flu vaccine soon is also another important way for you to prepare for the winter season. People over the age of 50 are one of several groups recommended for a seasonal flu shot. Caregivers of seniors also fall under these general flu shot recommendations due to the possibility of spreading the virus to the individuals they care for.

- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get vaccinated against the flu as soon as the 2010-2011 season vaccine is available.
- Children younger than 6 months are at high risk of serious flu illness, but are too young to be vaccinated. People who care for them should be vaccinated instead.
- High risk groups include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older.
- Vaccination of high risk persons is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness.
- Vaccination also is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to high risk people.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this season people 65 years and older will have two flu shots available to choose from - a regular dose flu vaccine and a new flu vaccine designed for people 65 and older with a higher dose. The high dose vaccine is associated with a stronger immune response to vaccination. However, whether the stronger immune response results in greater protection against influenza illness in older adults is not yet known. The CDC and its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices have not expressed a preference for either vaccine.

For more information on the flu vaccine, call (614) 437-2900 or visit www.vaccine4me.com.