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**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Pinellas County Health Department Receives Limited Supply of Flu Vaccine  
*Bulk of Initial Supply Will Go To Private Sector Risk Groups***

The Pinellas County Health Department has received 4,900 doses of adult influenza vaccine, which will be distributed primarily to healthcare facilities during the upcoming weeks. Local health officials are finalizing plans to follow Florida Department of Health directives that instruct county health departments to coordinate distribution of vaccines within the private sector.

Individuals in the risk categories are encouraged to contact their regular healthcare provider to locate a flu shot, as supplies from the manufacturer are now being shipped to private physicians' offices. Healthcare providers, including those who ordered vaccine from Chiron, are encouraged to contact Aventis to confirm and check the status of any scheduled shipments of vaccine.

To allow time for private providers to receive their expected shipments, the Pinellas County Health Department's initial distribution plans are as follows:

- 3,500 doses will be distributed to area hospitals, nursing homes and healthcare facilities starting November 15.
- 400 doses have been allocated for public health and first responders starting November 15.
- 1,000 doses will be available for at-risk individuals at the Senior Friendly Extravaganza at Tropicana Field on November 17.

"Our immediate task is to make sure that the initial supply we've received reaches those who are most at risk during an outbreak of influenza," said John P. Heilman, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Pinellas County Health Department. "We're asking for the community's continued patience, and encourage those in the risk categories to contact their healthcare providers to see if flu vaccine is available there."

High risk individuals can also be vaccinated for pneumonia – an infection often contracted after the body is weakened from the flu. While this vaccine does not provide protection against the influenza virus, it does offer protection against a common complication from the flu. To obtain a pneumonia vaccine, individuals should contact their primary healthcare provider. In addition, pneumonia vaccinations are available through the Pinellas County Health Department.

In most years, local health departments – including the Pinellas County Health Department – provide only a small portion of flu vaccines administered in their communities. Other vaccines are provided through doctor's offices, hospitals and private health care providers. Additional flu shots are administered in nursing homes, assisted living facilities (ALF's) and hospitals. Health officials emphasize that flu vaccine shipments are now being sent to these private providers, and encourage those at risk to be in contact with their regular provider to see if vaccine is available.

Officials at the Pinellas County Health Department remind individuals that flu season has not yet begun in our area, and there is ample time for those at risk to get vaccinated. "Some additional vaccine supplies may become available in the coming weeks, and we will continue to work to get flu shots to those in need," Heilman said.

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