

## Flu activity increasing in state and nationwide, according to MSDH

*Special to The Clinton Courier*

Nationally, flu is impacting children ages four and under, with more hospitalizations in that age group than any other, and eleven pediatric influenza deaths so far. In Mississippi, one pediatric flu death has been reported this season.

“We’re seeing geographic spread as well as an increase in flu activity, and we’re receiving reports of nursing home outbreaks,” said MSDH State Health Officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs.

“Again, it’s very important to get your flu shot to protect yourself and those around you from getting the

flu. It’s not too late as peak season in Mississippi usually starts this month and lasts through March,” said Dobbs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the predominant flu strain circulating now is H1N1, which has a tendency to affect children.

“Remember that eighty percent of pediatric flu deaths last year were in children who were not vaccinated against the flu,” said Dobbs. “With school starting back after the holidays, now is an optimal time to make sure your child, as well as your entire family, has gotten their flu shots.”

Flu shots are recommended for all those six months and older. Those 18 and under who are eligible for the Vaccines for Children program can receive flu vaccination for \$10. Insurance, Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is accepted for children’s flu shots.

Only those adults who are underinsured or uninsured and who meet certain high-risk criteria qualify for a flu vaccine at MSDH county health department clinics. Flu shots for insured adults are now widely available through private physicians, pharmacies, and retailers.

While vaccination is the best protection, basic infection control measures can also reduce the spread of flu and should be taken whether or not individuals are vaccinated. These measures include covering your mouth when coughing and sneezing, staying at home when you or your children are sick, and washing your hands frequently.

To locate a county health department clinic in your area or for more information on flu, visit the MSDH website at [www.HealthyMS.com/flu](http://www.HealthyMS.com/flu). Follow MSDH by email and social media at [HealthyMS.com/connect](http://HealthyMS.com/connect).



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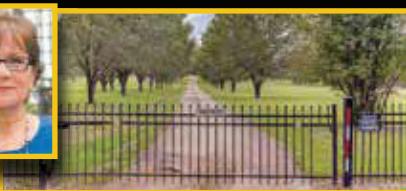
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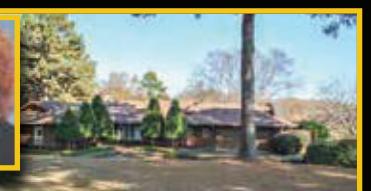
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