Dr. Rachel Herlihy, director of the immunization program at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, is urging Coloradans to get their annual flu vaccination.

To get immunized for flu, contact a health care provider or visit http://flushot.healthmap.org to find a vaccination clinic in the area.

Family Practice of Holyoke is offering its seasonal flu clinic. The first dates were scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday Oct. 2 and 4. The final two days will be Tuesday and Thursday Oct. 9 and 11 at SunSet View 5:30-7 p.m. each night. Price for a flu vaccination during the seasonal clinic is reduced from the price if received at the Family Practice of Holyoke clinic.

Many grocery stores and pharmacies also offer these vaccinations, as well as some employers.

Herlihy said, “When getting your flu vaccine, it’s an excellent time to ask your health provider whether you also should be immunized for pertussis, also called whooping cough. Colorado has seen an epidemic number of whooping cough cases reported, 849 since January.

“We are encouraging adults to ask their doctor about a Tdap vaccination for themselves and to make sure their children are up to date with their vaccinations. It’s especially important for families with very young children, who are more vulnerable to whooping cough. Child care workers also should make sure they are up to date on their whooping cough vaccinations,” she added

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends everyone 6 months of age and older get the seasonal flu vaccination. The vaccine is available as a shot or a nasal spray. Flu can strike anytime but is most likely to infect people between October and May.

This year’s flu vaccination protects against three strains of influenza: the same strain of 2009 H1N1 that was in last year’s vaccine and two new strains: an H3N2 virus and a B virus. The vaccination is the best way to protect from flu.

While flu often is treated successfully at home, it is a serious respiratory illness that can result in hospitalization and even death. It is difficult to predict how many persons may become ill from flu during the upcoming flu season, as the timing, severity and length of the season depends on many factors. During the past three flu seasons in Colorado, flu contributed to an average of 1,200 Colorado residents being hospitalized each season.

No pediatric deaths due to flu were reported in Colorado residents during the 2011-2012 flu season, but three pediatric flu deaths were reported during the 2010-2011 season and 12 pediatric flu deaths were reported during the 2009-2010 season.

People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children; pregnant women; people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease; and people 65 years and older.

This year, a new state rule aimed at protecting patients from influenza requires licensed health care facilities to report vaccination rates of their employees. Health care workers can unintentionally pass the flu virus to their patients. The rule requires facilities to reach a threshold of 60 percent of employees vaccinated this year, 75 percent next year and 90 percent thereafter.

For more information on flu, go to http://www.cdc.gov/flu .

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