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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flu Mist Option Not Recommended for 2016-17 Influenza Season

Pierce County residents strongly encouraged to protect themselves with a flu shot before the season arrives

The Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) recently announced that the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), best known as nasal spray, or by the trade name Flu Mist, should not be used during the 2016-17 influenza season. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices voted to recommend it not be used after data showed poor or relatively low effectiveness of the nasal spray from 2013 through 2016.

"While it is disappointing to see data suggesting that the nasal spray vaccine is not working as well as expected, we are pleased that flu shots did perform well last season," said State Health Officer Karen McKeown. "We expect that there will be enough of the injectable vaccine available for the 2016-17 season so everyone 6 months and older can protect themselves and their loved ones against the flu."

How well the flu vaccine works can range widely from season to season and can be affected by a number of factors, including the similarity between vaccine viruses and circulating viruses. The CDC conducts vaccine effectiveness studies each season to gauge the success of a vaccine in preventing the flu virus. Data on the effectiveness of the nasal spray among children ages 2-17 during the 2015-16 season found that no effective benefit from the LAIV could be measured. By comparison, data found the injectable vaccine to be very effective in preventing flu among children in this age group. This change in recommendation underscores the importance of ongoing efforts to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of vaccines to ensure the public is optimally protected from health threats.

During the 2015-16 flu season there were approximately 240 influenza related hospitalizations in our region of the state. It is important to get vaccinated annually for influenza. In Pierce County, only 31% of children under 19, 23% of adults age 19-64, and 67% of adults 65 or older were vaccinated for influenza during the 2015-16 season.

The Pierce County Health Department will once again be holding school and community flu shot clinics this fall. More information including CDC recommendation for the 2016-17 flu season will be available late summer or early fall.