



News from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Freeholders Encourage Residents to Prepare for Seasonal Flu

The Somerset County Board of Freeholders and the county Health Department are urging residents to be aware that flu season in New Jersey is typically between October and early April, and that there are measures they can take to avoid becoming ill. **The seasonal flu is not the H1N1 swine flu virus.**

“Over the summer months, the topic of the H1N1 virus has received significant media coverage. However, it’s important that residents be reminded that the seasonal-flu season has begun,” said Freeholder Deputy Director Jack M. Ciattarelli, health department liaison. “Our goal is to inform and prepare residents for the typical-flu strain.”

Influenza spreads from person to person, primarily through contact with respiratory droplets. The spread of seasonal flu can be reduced by covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue and discarding it immediately and by coughing or sneezing into the crook of the elbow.

This method has been coined the Dracula Sneeze by students in California, because the fictional character covers his face with his cape. It provides a good visual of the proper way to cover coughs and sneezes.

In addition to covering coughs and sneezes properly, it’s important to wash hands often and for an extended period of time - at least 20 seconds. Also, avoiding sick people and crowds and staying home when sick can reduce the spread of influenza.

Another way to prevent seasonal flu is by routine immunization. The influenza vaccine - flu shot - is available through family doctors and a variety of health care providers, such as local health departments, visiting nurse associations and senior centers. Also, some local drug stores and retail stores may be giving the flu shot. Residents can contact stores they frequent to learn more.

Residents may learn ways to prevent the seasonal flu, find tips on getting ready for flu season, view a schedule of locations where the flu vaccine is being given by local health departments and health commissions and view common questions and answers about the seasonal flu, such as who should be vaccinated, by visiting the Somerset County Health Department website at <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/health/index.htm> or calling 908-231-7155.

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