

LC 434: Expand Access to Influenza Vaccine at Pharmacies

For many Oregon families, the nearest and most convenient place to get a flu vaccine is at their local pharmacy. Unfortunately, pharmacists cannot vaccinate young children, causing difficulty for families trying to get their youngest members protected.

Oregon families face unnecessary barriers to getting their youngest children vaccinated against influenza

Every fall, all Oregonians age six months and older are recommended to receive an annual flu vaccine. Flu vaccines are simple to administer, and many formulations use the exact same dose for infants through adults. Trained pharmacists routinely provide vaccinations to patients seven years of age or older – or, during the declared public health emergency, to patients three years of age or older.

However, families seeking to get flu vaccines for children younger than seven (or three) require a separate visit to a medical clinic. Most medical clinics offer vaccination appointments only during office hours, which typically do not include evenings and weekends. Taking a young child in for a flu vaccine may require an adult to take time off work. For busy families, a separate appointment may be a serious barrier that prevents their children from being protected.

Solution: Allow pharmacists to vaccinate children six months of age and older against influenza

This bill would allow any child over six months of age to be vaccinated at a local pharmacy. Many pharmacies offer evening and weekend hours, and often offer walk-in immunizations, while most clinics do not. For working parents and guardians, this could eliminate the barrier of having to take time off to get their child a flu vaccine. For people with transportation concerns, pharmacies may be easier to access than their child's primary care clinic. If flu vaccines are available in the locations families already visit, in this case a local pharmacy, they may be more willing to ensure their youngest family members get vaccinated.

This bill would not require any pharmacy or pharmacist to offer vaccinations to children under three years of age. Pharmacists would be allowed to offer flu vaccines to this age group after they receive additional training and feel prepared to serve young children.

For more information:

Cynthia Branger Muñoz

(971) 372-0768

cynthia.branger-munoz@dhsoha.state.or.us