Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I'm Judy Simpson. With the flu season right around the corner of medical experts say the best way to protect yourself and your family has is with the flu shot. Last year nearly 50% of Vermonters over the age of six months received a flu shot. While the percentage is higher than the national average it's still far below the goal of universal vaccination. To learn more about flu shots and protecting yourself from the flu we've called on Pat Donehower. Pat is a nurse and vice president of clinical services at the visiting nurses association of Chittenden and grand isle county. Welcome to you. The VNA helps provide flu shots to literally thousands of Vermonters tell me about that.

Pat.: Flu shot flu season is here. Part of our mission is to help keep people well and to teach them principles of good health. Treating the flu helping people get flu shots is part of our mission and has been for over 100 years. In the past it was different communicable diseases. As the VNA was founded many many years ago it was because was very very prevalent in the community. People needed help and did not understand infectious diseases they didn't know how to prevent it and so we got involved than and we're still involved with flu season.

Judy.: You give out thousands and thousands of shots every year.

Pat.: We do. We've given out over 6000 shots last year and in some years it's more than that. We try to make ourselves available we try to make it easy for folks and try to help people understand why so important.

Judy.: In addition to flu shots what other services does the VNA provide?

Pat.: We are a fairly large Home Health agency. Our main offices in Colchester. We have over 700 employees. We have five clinical divisions and many supportive services that keep us running humming every day. We started as I said Long ago. Our emphasis was on mothers and babies and family's and keeping them well. Over the years we've added more services as the community need arose. One of our divisions is aimed towards helping folks recover from perhaps hospitalization or chronic illness. We still have our family and children support services department which helps with high risk moms with family education. We have a family room in the old north end where a lot of folks can come to learn good parenting techniques. We have a whole division devoted to helping people with whatever they need in their home so they can stay home as long as possible. We call that our long-term care division. We sometimes think of ourselves as one of the largest nursing homes a niche and in grand isle county because we have over 250 folks who wouldn't qualify for nursing homes but are able to stay home because of the care we bring into their home every day.
Judy:. Which is really important. It sounds like it's all about outreach.

Pat.: We're out and about every day. The VNA started with two nurses and they walked or rode on bicycle and now of course we drive most of the time and we use laptop computers. Big changes.

Judy.: Fantastic. Let's get back to the flu shot. Why is it so important for people to get the shot?

Pat.: The flu is actually a serious illness. It causes a lot of suffering. A lot of loss of work and productivity. It can lead to even more serious situations which could cause hospitalization. It's more risky for some people than others. Those that are in fragile health they have chronic disease tiny babies. It's all avoidable so if we take the right precautions we can control this in our community.

Judy.: Because even people who say I'm healthy I usually do not get the flu but if you do get the flu it wears you down which makes use of supplie to anything else.

Pat.: Right if you're fighting one disease you could easily catch something else. If you had the flu it could easily lead to pneumonia or other kinds of infections. It's risky and one of the things that impressed me early on was that even if I didn't have the flu I could communicate it to somebody else.

Judy.: That's just it you can give the flute someone else. This year what sort of flu season is expected.

Pat.: The flu season varies and it's very hard to predict so first of all it's important to get a flu shot every year because the flu changes. It's a slightly different organism every year. We're expecting to get going the centers for disease control have said as soon as you get the vaccine start making it available to the community. We have started our clinics already we started bringing it into homes of folks who cannot get out we started with our businesses. We bring it to businesses so their employees do not have to go anywhere to have a shot. And our clinics will be running regularly now as well as I think you see signs in the community get your flu shot now.

Judy.: What about timing when will the flu activity begin and when is it going to peak do you know that?

Pat.: The peak is hard to predict. Generally it comes January February for a peek but people are getting ill before that and after that. The best advice that we give is to get your flu shot as soon as you can.

Judy.: What actions are steps can you take to protect yourself or family against the flu.

Pat.: There's good news there too because the first of all it's very easy and simple to get a shot. That's the first thing and very important but there are other basic activities that you can do their very very helpful. One is since we know the flu is spread through what we call droplet infections. So when you sneeze that little bit of moisture that comes out. Or when you cough can spread the flu so the idea is capture that and let it dry out instead of being what on someone's skin. When you cough into a Kleenex cough into your sleeve anything that will help keep that moisture away from someone else or your own hands where you can spread it and keep spreading it.

Judy.: Wash your hands.

Pat.: And hands that's the basic thing we're teaching folks how effective it is to keep your hands clean. The basics there are if your hands look to RE wash with soap and water and take your time there's really no hurry. Sometimes you will just quickly wash your hands. Take your time washer hands thoroughly and dry them. If you're a situation where you can wash our hands it's a great idea
to use either the gel for the spray alcohol based sanitizer. Folks should look for at least 60% alcohol
in the senate as a.

Judy.: And of course it stay home if you're sick

Pat.: That's the other thing.

Judy.: Don't be a hero.

Pat.: And it's hard because if you're working and have something you really want to do you really you
really want to go but you're not doing yourself any good and you really can be endangering other
people so stay home stay away from people. Who the other important thing to know unfortunately is
that you can carry and spread and have the disease and not know it for another 24 hours. That's why
it's important to get the flu shot and also cover your cough cover your sneeze and wash your hands.

Judy.: It's important for everyone to get the flu shot there are some people who are more vulnerable if
they get the flu.

Pat.: That’s true as we were saying it's a very serious illness. You feel very sick you lose work and
productivity but some folks including pregnant women tiny babies individuals who are over 65 and
individuals who have a chronic disease that already is causing them to the someone fighting other
conditions. You don't have the resilience that you might otherwise have.

Judy.: It's important to point out people who work with these populations it's important to get the
shot because of that.

Pat.: Absolutely. Health Care workers day care workers moms and dads who are around tiny babies
grandparents who are going to visit and because it takes two weeks to develop your immunity the
time is now. Get your flu shot now.

Judy.: Speaking of now flu shots are administered by Health Care professionals like Peg Haskell.
Peg is a registered nurse with visiting nurses association of Chittenden County and grand isle
counties and she is going to give me a flu shot and I've noticed you've already put on your hands
sanitizer and you're putting your gloves on and you make the sign this consent form.

Peg.: I have. I did and we do ask folks some questions like are you feeling sick today. We don't want
them to get the flu shot if they're having a fever. Mild illness is OK. We ask about an egg allergy too.

Judy.: Why's that?

Peg.: The actual vaccine is incubated in eggs so there's a trace amount. There's new guidelines out
this year if you have a sensitivity to it just checked with your Physician. You may still be able to get
the flu shot. Then any allergy to any other kinds of vaccines are something that we ask people
because that some hints that we should delve a little further into their history to decide if it's safe to
give them a flu shot.

Judy.: OK so you'd asked me the questions and I've signed the consent form.

Peg.: And I'm just going to put my gloves on.

Judy.: And I'm going to take my arm out of my sleeve thank you pat.

Peg.: And we will give you that. I'd like to lower your arm and drop your shoulder. There we go.
Pat.: you'll be all set.

Judy.: I know I'm excited. Is this going to protect me from the flu right away?

Peg.: It takes about two weeks for your immunity to develop.

Judy.: OK. Are there any side effects that I might experience?

Peg.: Your arm will get a little sore for a couple days some people have no soreness.

Judy.: So I probably shouldn't do any heavy lifting like dishes or laundry for a couple days.

Peg.: Well that's a good excuse but I don't think it's going to fly. It does help you if you actually move it might be a little sore. The what we do with everybody that gets a flu shot and yours is right here Judy. That's your vaccine information statement updated by the CDC every year and it has all the instructions about what to do if you should have anything happened afterward but like I said it's mostly just redness a little bit of soreness in the arm

Judy.: Am I going to get the flu from the flu shot? Because that's what people say if you get the flu shot that's going to give you the flu.

Peg.: Absolutely not it's actually impossible because what I just gave you were inactivated virus' so it's not the flu virus. You cannot get the flu from the flu shot.

Judy.: Pat I know you have a list of places where people can go and get the shots.

Pat.: Right to be in a has clinics we started our clinics already and there's a list you can see repeated on the web we have a website VNA cares.org. The health department also has a list of many places to get the flu shot and when easy thing to remember is that add cream road at our main site we're doing Saturday clinics starting October 8.

Judy.: Do you need an appointment for that?

Pat.: No no appointment just walk right in any time. We had it pretty well organized I think we can get you write in and out.

Judy.: I want to thank head who just walked off camera. By arm doesn't hurt a bit she did a great job. Is it ever too late to get a flu shot?

Pat.: Not really because as we said it's hard to tell when it's going to peak. Last year it was February so if it was January and you thought gee didn't get it it's still a good time to get it so I would say no right through the cold season it's OK to go ahead and get the flu shot.

Judy.: So there's no excuse if maybe you missed the first couple of clinics to keep at it.

Pat.: Note the flu shot will be very very available in our community and the VNA is one place that you can give them and there are many other places and the idea is go and get it. We also bring the flu shot to businesses if a company wants us to come we will come right there and give it to their employees during the workday.

Judy.: I know that happens here at channel three and it's so convenient because you don't even have to think about it it's a no brainer and it's great for companies to support that.
Pat.: It is in the tell me that they notice a huge difference in their illness and loss of work when they
don't have flu shots.

Judy.: That's fantastic. Before we run out of time I want to highlight some of the online resources for
information about the flu and flu shots. You can go to the VNA and website it's a VNA CARES.
Org/flu for flu information from the Vermont department of health go to health
Vermont.gov/prevent/flew for information from the U.S. Dept. of health and human services. I know
you are saying even if you don't think you'll ever get the flu chances are that you could really in fact
somebody else if you do not get the shot.

Pat.: You could and people that are of high risk the other lee and the tiny babies really need those
around them to get the flu shot so they will not be exposed.

Judy.: So if not for yourself but for people you're going to be interacting with.

Pat.: For the community we can get above 50% vaccination this is really going to help the
community.

Judy.: I want to thank you for joining me today.

That.: You're welcome thank you for having me.

Judy.: That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson we will see you again next time on across the
fence.

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