

**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations**



**Department of Human Services  
Division of Elderly Affairs**

**RHODE ISLAND SENIOR BEAT**

**BY:** Larry Grimaldi, Chief of Information & Public Relations  
462-0509 lgrimaldi@dea.ri.gov

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**IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GET YOUR FLU SHOT**

**CRANSTON ---** The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) reports that more than 470,000 Rhode Islanders have done it already! Have you? It's not too late.

While influenza levels are beginning to decrease, the flu season does not end until May. The flu can cause very serious health complications for seniors, persons with chronic health or respiratory diseases, or those with weakened immune systems. Serious health consequences, such as pneumonia, may require hospitalization. Fatalities occur each year as a result of the influenza outbreak. HEALTH notes that since mid-December, more than 7,800 persons have visited emergency rooms across the state exhibiting flu-like symptoms. More than 750 have been hospitalized. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend getting a flu shot each year because flu strains vary from year to year.

Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, and fatigue. If you, or someone you know, experiences these symptoms, call a doctor immediately and get appropriate treatment.

There are a number of places that you can get a flu shot. Many local pharmacies will give you a flu shot without an appointment. You may be able to get a flu shot from your doctor, health care provider, or local healthcare clinic. While the majority of health insurance plans cover the flu shot, there may be a cost for the vaccination. Check with your insurance company, your healthcare provider, or the local pharmacy. For more information on flu clinics, call the HEALTH information line at 222-5960, or go to [www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov).

Getting a flu shot is just the first of "Take 3" actions recommended by CDC to fight influenza.

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**John O. Pastore Center, Hazard Building / 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
74 West Road, Cranston, RI 02920  
Telephone 401-462-3000, Fax 401-462-0503, TTY 401-462-0740  
Web Site: [www.dea.ri.gov](http://www.dea.ri.gov)**

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CDC offers these common-sense, everyday actions that you can take to stop the spread of the flu virus:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- To avoid spreading germs, Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces like tables and counters often; and also disinfect objects like your telephone receiver, or computer keyboard.
- Avoid contact with persons that you know are sick.
- Stay home until at least 24-hours after all of your flu symptoms disappear.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze. Throw the tissue away after you use it once.

While the ‘Take 3’ approach to fight against the flu may not be the same as listening to legendary jazz great Dave Brubeck’s “Take 5,” it will help to keep you away from the flu and its misery.

Medicare Fraud Town Hall Meeting: The Boston Regional Office of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Rhode Island Division of Elderly Affairs (DEA) are sponsoring a Medicare fraud town hall meeting on Tuesday, February 12 at the Johnston Senior Center, 1291 Hartford Avenue at 10:30 a.m. The meeting will feature a panel discussion on recognizing and reporting Medicare fraud and abuse. Panel members include Christie Hager, Regional Director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); Ray Hurd, Acting Regional Administrator for CMS; Jon-Paul Correia, Special Agent in Charge, Boston Regional Office for HHS, Office of the Inspector General; and Aleatha Dickerson, Program Manager, Rhode Island Senior Medicare Patrol Program. The moderator for the panel will be Felice Freyer, medical writer for the *Providence Journal*.

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The Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Division of Elderly Affairs (DEA) is responsible for the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of programs and services for Rhode Islanders ages 60 and older and for adults with disabilities. Questions or requests for additional information on the issues of growing older, or for issues concerning adults with disabilities in Rhode Island should be directed to: Larry Grimaldi, Rhode Island Senior Beat, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Division of Elderly Affairs, 74 West Road, Cranston, RI 02920 or faxed to 462-0545. The e-mail address is lgrimaldi@dea.ri.gov.

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