Flu data used to determine vaccine effectiveness

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(Medical Xpress)—Armed with data on vaccine effectiveness from five study monitoring sites, including one at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, the Centers for Disease Control is renewing the call for everyone over the age of six months to get a flu vaccine.

The CDC says this year's vaccine on average is 62 percent effective against influenza, a number consistent with clinical trials and historic profiles.

"The vaccine is giving considerable protection," said Dr. Arnold Monto, professor of epidemiology whose lab at U-M is part of the U.S. Influenza Vaccine Effectiveness (Flu VE) Network. "It may also modify the severity of illness. Taking the vaccine probably also means you won't transmit as much to others, allowing you to protect your neighbors and your household, even if you do get the flu."

Monto, a world-renowned flu expert who has studied transmission of influenza in communities for years, and colleague Allison Aiello, associate professor of epidemiology, are working on a study in U-M residence halls on the effect of voluntary isolation on transmission.

The CDC weekly report also calls for the use of antiviral medications. Prescription drugs like Tamiflu and Relenza can be used to reduce symptoms and shorten the duration of the flu by as much as 1-2 days, according to the CDC. These medications typically are recommended for people who are at high risk for complications from the flu: the very

young or old, those with compromised immune systems or serious chronic illnesses.

"My feeling is that antivirals should be considered in any severe case, especially for those in a high-risk category," Monto said.

More information: Read the CDC weekly Influenza report at: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrh … ?s_cid=mm62e0111a1_e

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