

Spread the word, not the flu

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Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Bruce Greenstein bravely extended his arm before a crowd at a Tulane community clinic on Thursday (Dec. 6) to show how easy it is to get a flu shot this season. And it didn't even hurt.



Nurse Myra Williams, right, and Dr. Karen DeSalvo administer a flu shot to Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals Secretary Bruce Greenstein at the Ruth U. Fertel/Tulane Community Health Center. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Greenstein joined New Orleans Health Commissioner Dr. Karen DeSalvo to kick off the state's [flu vaccine campaign](#) at the [Ruth U. Fertel/Tulane Community Health Center](#). Both got their flu shots before issuing a call to remind the public that flu season is here, and it's not too late to get vaccinated.

"We each have a responsibility to protect ourselves and our loved ones from getting or spreading the flu," Greenstein said. "The simplest and most important precaution is to get vaccinated. It is safe, effective and readily available at doctors' offices, pharmacies and health units statewide."

DeSalvo cautioned that the message is particularly important for New Orleans this year as the city prepares for an unusually busy tourism season with both Mardi Gras

and the Super Bowl on the horizon.

Flu season begins in October and runs through April. In Louisiana, flu season typically peaks in February, but this year's season is off to its earliest start in almost a decade, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Louisiana is one of five Southern states experiencing higher-than-usual flu activity. This year's vaccine also includes protection against the H1N1 virus and no shortages are expected, Greenstain said.

Flu shots are available by appointment at the Tulane community health center. Earlier this year, the center partnered with [Groupon](#) to raise \$880, which provided flu shots to 44 uninsured and underserved patients.