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Flu Prevention Tips

According to the most recent reports from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), seasonal influenza (flu) activity remains high for most the United States. While it is beginning to go down in parts of the country, some areas are still rising. Two notable characteristics of flu this season: The first is that flu activity became widespread within almost all states and jurisdictions at the same time; the second is that flu activity has now stayed at the same level for three weeks in a row, with 49 states reporting widespread activity, each week, for three weeks. The highest rates of influenza-associated hospitalizations are among people 65 years and older, followed by adults aged 50-64 years, and children younger than five years. A total of 37 influenza-associated pediatric deaths for the 2017-2018 season have been reported to CDC.

The Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) encourages residents to protect themselves and their loved ones during the flu season. Flu is a highly contagious viral disease. It is primarily spread by person to person contact via coughing or sneezing. Flu symptoms include: cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, fever, chills, and body aches.

Flu prevention tips:

1. Get vaccinated.

- A yearly flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. It is not too late to get a flu shot for yourself and for your loved ones.
- Vaccination is especially important for protecting those at high risk for serious flu complications, including: young children, pregnant women, adults 65 years and older, and anyone with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

2. Stop the spread.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

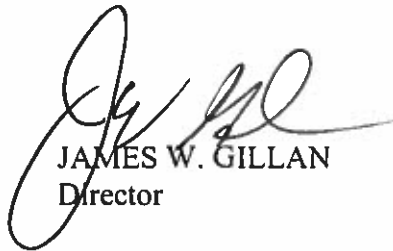
3. Take medicine.

- CDC recommends prompt treatment with flu antiviral medications for:

- People who are at high risk of developing serious flu complications when they get the flu: the very young, the very old, the pregnant women, and those with underlying illnesses like heart conditions and lung problems.
- People who are very sick with flu symptoms like shortness of breath and difficulty breathing, chest pain, very high and persistent fevers, and ear pain. Those are the things that should lead parents or the individual to go see their doctor where they may be prescribed antiviral medications.
- Use medication as recommended by your doctor to treat the flu.

All health care providers are urged to review and update the immunization status of all patients they see. If vaccination is contraindicated because of illness, a follow-up appointment should be scheduled to update vaccination as soon as the illness is over.

For more information, please call your primary health care provider or the DPHSS Immunization Program at 735-7143.



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