



KENT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR
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Flu Season Could be the Worst in Years

[KENT, OH] - This year's flu virus has been dramatically more widespread than in previous years, resulting in more hospital stays. In Ohio, there are now two confirmed pediatric deaths associated with this year's virus.

State health officials report that 1,750 new cases of flu-related hospitalizations occurred in the first full week of January. This is a significant increase over last year's hospitalizations at this time, which there were 369. Thus far for the 2017-18 flu season, there have been a total of 3,854 flu-associated hospitalizations in Ohio since the season began in October. Flu activity traditionally begins to increase in October and can last as late as May, with cases typically peaking between December and February.

So far, influenza A (H3N2) viruses have been the most common flu viruses circulating this season, according to CDC. H3N2-predominant flu seasons have been associated with more severe illness, especially among children and adults age 65 and older. Vaccine effectiveness against H3N2 viruses has been around 30 percent. Vaccine effectiveness against other circulating flu viruses has been about 60 percent for H1N1 viruses, and around 50 percent for influenza B viruses. A study also done on flu vaccination said that it can significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from influenza.

Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Flu vaccination is available at most healthcare providers' offices, local health departments and retail pharmacies. There are no flu vaccine shortages across Ohio.

Other effective ways to avoid getting or spreading the flu include: washing hands frequently or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer; covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, or coughing or sneezing into elbows; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; and staying home when sick.

"For many reasons, older adults are more likely than younger adults to experience the flu and its complications," said Dr. Clint Koenig, Medical Director of the Ohio Department of Health. "The flu can make existing health problems worse and can be particularly dangerous for the 80 percent of older Ohioans who have at least one chronic condition, such as diabetes or heart disease."

Additional flu information can be found at: City of Kent Health Department:
<http://www.kentpublichealth.org/> or www.flu.ohio.gov.