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Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It's Time for Your Annual Flu Shot

DUPAGE COUNTY—Influenza (flu) season in Illinois typically starts in the fall, and the DuPage County Health Department is recommending that everyone 6 months and older be vaccinated against influenza. The Health Department suggests that residents check with their physician's office or local pharmacy for the availability of flu vaccine.

The single most effective way to prevent getting the flu is an annual flu shot. Influenza is a serious illness and can be fatal. Flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and thousands, or sometimes tens of thousands, of deaths. Flu hit children hard last season with 135 lab-confirmed influenza-associated pediatric deaths reported nationally. The majority of these deaths occurred in children who had not received a flu vaccination.

Even healthy people get the flu each year, so it's important for everyone to be vaccinated. Protecting yourself from flu also protects the people around you who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness. The way to keep the flu from spreading through a community is to get more people vaccinated, which is important because the flu season can last as late as May.

In addition to getting a flu shot, the Health Department recommends following the 3 Cs:

- Clean – frequently wash your hands with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Cover – cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- Contain – contain your germs by staying home if you are sick except to get medical care.

Influenza antiviral drugs can be a second line of defense for treatment of some who get sick with flu. Many observational studies have found that in addition to lessening the duration and severity of symptoms, antiviral drugs can help prevent flu complications.

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Because it is important to start antiviral medication quickly, high-risk patients (e.g., children under 5 years old, adults age 50 years and older, pregnant women, persons with chronic medical conditions) should contact a healthcare professional at the first signs of influenza symptoms, which include sudden onset of fever, sore throat or cough, body aches, chills and tiredness.

For more information about the flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/flu.

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