



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flu Activity is High, But It's Not Too Late to Get A Flu Shot

DUPAGE COUNTY—With the latest influenza (flu) report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showing high levels of influenza-like illness in Illinois as well as 33 other states, the DuPage County Health Department reminds you it's not too late to get the flu vaccine.

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A flu shot is the best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications. It can take about two weeks after getting a flu shot for you to be protected, which is important because the flu season usually starts in October and can last as late as May.

So far this season, CDC estimates there have been at least 6.4 million flu illnesses, 55,000 hospitalizations and 2,900 deaths from the flu in the U.S. The Illinois Department of Public Health is reporting widespread flu activity in the state, and flu activity is currently estimated to be elevated in DuPage County. Several DuPage County residents have been admitted to the intensive-care unit (ICU) for flu-related illness, including children and adults. Of all influenza ICU admissions this season to date, only 40 percent have been vaccinated against flu.

Health officials urge DuPage County residents to be vaccinated and healthcare providers to promote flu vaccination to all persons 6 months and older. As long as flu viruses are circulating, it is not too late to get vaccinated, even in January or later. Flu vaccination is the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease and its complications toward reducing hospitalization and death. In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading flu to others.

In addition, there are prescription medications called antiviral drugs that can be used to treat influenza illness. If you have a loved one who is at high risk of flu complications (such as children younger than 5, adults 65 and older, pregnant women and women up to 2 weeks after the end of pregnancy, people with a weakened immune system due to disease or medication, and persons with underlying conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes) and they develop flu symptoms, encourage them to get a medical evaluation for possible treatment with flu antiviral drugs. These drugs work best if given within 48 hours of when symptoms start.

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Flu antiviral drugs can make flu symptoms milder and can shorten duration of illness. Early treatment of flu with antiviral drugs also has been shown to reduce the incidence of ear infections and the need for antibiotic treatment in children between ages 1 and 12. Treatment with antiviral drugs also may reduce more serious flu-related complications like pneumonia and hospitalizations. Studies in both adults and children show that treatment of hospitalized patients can be beneficial in preventing respiratory failure and death.

More information on influenza prevention and treatment is available at:
www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm

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