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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.

**November 22, 2022
For Immediate Release**

DuPage County Health Systems Experiencing Dramatic Increase in Number of Children Seeking Care for Respiratory Diseases *Leads to Shortage of Pediatric Hospital Beds and Delayed Care*

DUPAGE COUNTY - Right now, across DuPage County, there are days when there are no open beds for seriously ill children in the hospitals serving the nearly 1 million residents of DuPage County.

Hospitals and clinics are seeing a dramatic increase in the number of people who are ill with respiratory diseases like influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19. Children are being especially impacted, with more children with severe illness seeking care at hospitals with some waiting hours to be seen. Some even need to be transferred to another healthcare facility.

We must work together to stay healthy and reduce the number of people who are sick. As public health and medical leaders in DuPage County, our organizations are working hard to ensure the healthcare providers and resources necessary to care for these individuals are available. Our healthcare systems and workers are being stretched and strained again. This means we risk not having the care we need available at the time we need it.

Thankfully, there are actions we can take to ensure this care continues to be always available. **We're asking for your help to make a difference by taking steps to reduce spread of disease in our communities over the holiday season.** This will help keep people healthy and ensure our healthcare systems are ready for those who need them – whether they are very sick, in an accident, or suffering from a life-threatening condition.

We hope everyone has opportunities to spend time with those they love over the next few months. Unfortunately, the winter months are also when respiratory diseases increase. We tend to spend more time indoors with larger groups of people. This increases the chances that someone who is ill will spread their infection to others. Avoid missing out on the big moments this season – help keep everyone safe and healthy with these three actions.

- 1. Be up to date with all recommended vaccines, including [COVID-19](#) and [influenza](#).**
 - By getting vaccinated, you can protect yourself and also avoid spreading preventable diseases to other people in your family and community.
 - Some people cannot get certain vaccines because they are too young or too old or they have a weakened immune system or other serious health condition. They are less likely to catch a preventable disease when you and others around them are vaccinated against it.

- More-

2. Stay home when you're sick.

- When you don't feel well, you may be more likely to spread disease to others when you are coughing, sneezing, feverish, etc.
- Protect those around you by staying away until you recover. Ask your healthcare provider if treatments are available and appropriate for you.
- If you are sick and develop any symptoms (such as a runny nose, cough, or fever), wear a mask if you need to be around others.
- Make sure to frequently wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- If you're an employer, encourage and support those who are sick to stay home to keep your staff and clients healthy.

3. Improve your air.

- Respiratory viruses spread through the air. Improve the air around you by bringing in as much outdoor air as possible—for example, opening windows or by increasing air filtration in your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, such as by changing filters frequently and using filters that are properly fitted and provide higher filtration.
- Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaners
- Turning on exhaust fans and using other fans to improve air flow or turn your thermostat to the "ON" position instead of "AUTO" to ensure your HVAC system provides continuous airflow and filtration.
- You may choose to wear a mask at any time as an additional precaution to protect yourself and others. If you are at [high risk for severe illness](#), consider wearing a mask indoors in public and taking [additional precautions](#). Wear the most protective mask you can that fits well. Wearing a high-quality mask (like an N95 or KN95) helps protect you and others by reducing the chance of spreading respiratory illness.

As public health and medical leaders in DuPage County, we recognize the tremendous efforts of healthcare workers across the county to take care of us, our friends, our families, and those we love. We are proud of the world class health and medical organizations in DuPage County. Help us ensure you or your loved one has the care they need when they need it. Take action to stay healthy and keep others safe around you.

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