

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2020

Contact: Office of Communications (614) 644-8562

## Ohio Weekly Flu Hospitalizations Jump to Highest of Season

*832 hospitalizations solidify flu as Ohio's primary infectious disease threat*

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) — The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reports that the number of new influenza-related hospitalizations last week was the highest yet of the 2019-2020 flu season. From January 26 to February 1, a total of 832 people were newly hospitalized. This marks an increase of more than 36% over the previous week of flu reporting. The full report can be found [here](#).

“The current flu hospitalization numbers are deeply concerning,” said ODH Director Amy Acton, MD, MPH. “While we must remain vigilant about the serious risk posed by the 2019 novel coronavirus, Ohio’s primary infectious disease threat of the moment is flu.”

Earlier this week, an 11-year-old girl from Lake County died from the flu, the second pediatric death of the 2019-2020 flu season. Ohio’s first pediatric flu death this season claimed a 16-year-old girl from Cuyahoga County.

Adult flu deaths are not reportable. However, to date, Ohio has reported 4,465 total influenza-associated hospitalizations for the 2019-2020 season. Ohio currently has no confirmed cases of 2019 novel coronavirus.

While the flu can become severe for anyone, it is especially dangerous for the very young and elderly, those with compromised or weakened immune systems, those with chronic health conditions, and pregnant women.

Flu spreads from person to person via droplets from coughing, sneezing, or close contact. Symptoms typically start one to four days after a person is exposed. Those symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, and tiredness.

“The best way to prevent getting the flu and passing it on to loved ones is to **get a flu shot**,” Dr. Acton said. “It’s not too late.”

You cannot get the flu from the flu shot, and it is recommended for everyone older than 6 months. If you have had problems with the flu shot before, talk to your medical provider about options available that might not cause problems for you. Because flu season continues through May, there is still time to get the vaccine.

You also can help prevent the spread of the flu and other infectious diseases by taking these precautions:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth after touching objects – this is how germs are spread.
- Practice good habits like disinfecting surfaces, getting plenty of sleep, and managing stress.

Learn more about the flu and precautions to take at [www.flu.ohio.gov](http://www.flu.ohio.gov).

###