

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flu Activity Increasing in Ohio; Still Time to Get a Flu Shot

Geographic Spread of Flu Activity Elevated to “Widespread,” Highest Level

COLUMBUS – Flu activity in Ohio is increasing and widespread throughout the state for the first time during this flu season. The number of flu-associated hospitalizations are also rising with 338 new hospitalizations during the first week of January compared to 166 during the last week of December. There have been 893 total flu-associated hospitalizations in Ohio so far this flu season, which runs from October 2018 to May 2019. The number of flu cases typically peak between December and February.

It’s not too late to get a flu shot, and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that everyone six months old and older get one as the best protection against seasonable flu viruses. It takes about two weeks for a flu shot to take full effect.

“Flu vaccination is the safest and most effective way to prevent the flu which can lead to missed work and school, and cause other serious health complications,” said ODH Medical Director Dr. Clint Koenig. “Pregnant women, young children and people who already have serious medical conditions are especially at risk for serious complications from the flu.”

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Although most people fully recover from the flu, some experience severe illness like pneumonia and respiratory failure, and the flu can sometimes be fatal. People who think that they may have the flu and are pregnant, have an underlying medical condition, or who are extremely ill should contact their healthcare provider immediately. Flu vaccines are offered by many doctor’s offices, clinics, local health departments, pharmacies and college health centers, as well as by many employers and some schools.

While vaccination provides the greatest protection against the flu, other effective ways to avoid getting or spreading it include: washing your hands frequently or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer; covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, or coughing or sneezing into your elbow; avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth; and staying home when sick and until fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.

Flu-associated hospitalizations in Ohio are tracking below the five-year average so far during this flu season (see graph below). More information about flu and flu activity in Ohio is available at www.flu.ohio.gov.

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