



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flu Activity in Ohio Increasing Again After Initial Decline

Flu Season Runs Through May—It's Not Too Late to Get a Flu Shot

COLUMBUS – New flu-associated hospitalizations have increased in Ohio for three weeks in a row after declining for two weeks in January. New flu-associated hospitalizations also are trending above the five-year average for the first time during the 2018-2019 flu season (see graph on page 2) which runs from October to May.

During the week of Feb. 10-16, there were 534 new flu-associated hospitalizations in Ohio compared to 489 during the previous week. That was still significantly fewer than the 1,135 new flu-associated hospitalizations reported during the same time period last year. There have been 3,178 total flu-associated hospitalizations reported in the state so far this flu season – significantly fewer than the 11,915 reported during the same timeframe last year. Ohio is reporting three flu-associated pediatric deaths for the 2018-2019 flu season.

“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 Dr. Clint Koenig, medical director of the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). “Pregnant women, young children and people who already have serious medical conditions are especially at risk for serious complications from the flu.”

In addition to getting a flu shot, ODH offers the following tips to help you stay healthy this flu season:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use alcohol-based sanitizer when you are unable to wash.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread this way.
- If you get sick, stay home from work and keep sick children home from school or child care.
- Get plenty of rest. Sleep is shown to help your body fight off illness.
- Keep your body healthy: eat a balanced diet including plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grain products; drink plenty of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol and saturated fat; and exercise regularly because 30 or more minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help boost your immunity.

Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Flu vaccination is available at most healthcare providers' offices, local health departments and retail pharmacies. There are no flu vaccine shortages across Ohio currently.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that healthcare providers prescribe one of two antiviral drugs as a second line of defense as soon as possible to patients with confirmed or suspected influenza who are hospitalized, have severe illness, or may be at higher risk for flu complications.

More information about flu and flu activity in Ohio is available at www.flu.ohio.gov.

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[NOTE – Graph of Ohio confirmed flu-associated hospitalizations by month during 2018-2019 flu season on next page]

Ohio Confirmed Influenza-associated Hospitalizations by Month; 2018-19 Influenza Season (n=3178);

