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Influenza Season Begins in Ohio; Ideal Time to Get Flu Shot

Flu vaccination best protection against illness and missed work or school

COLUMBUS – With the arrival of flu season, the Ohio Department of Health is recommending that all Ohioans six months and older get a flu shot now. Flu activity traditionally begins to increase in October and can last as late as May, with cases typically peaking between December and February.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the best protection against seasonal flu viruses. Flu vaccines have been updated this year to better match circulating flu viruses.

“Flu vaccination can help keep you from getting sick, missing work or school, and prevent flu-related hospitalization and death,” said Sietske de Fijter, state epidemiologist and ODH bureau chief of infectious diseases. “The more people who get vaccinated help protect others, including older adults, very young children, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term health conditions who are more vulnerable to serious flu complications.”

Symptoms of influenza can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

“If you are sick with the flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading it to others,” said de Fijter

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, 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 hands frequently or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer; covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, or coughing or sneezing into elbows; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; and staying home when sick and until fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.

CDC recommends that healthcare providers administer prescription antiviral medication as a second line of defense as soon as possible to patients with confirmed or suspected flu who are hospitalized, have severe illness, or may be at higher risk for flu complications.

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

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