

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Influenza Case Confirmed in Southwest Nebraska

A case of influenza has been confirmed in the Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) district. Influenza is highly contagious and is caused by the influenza virus. The virus is spread from person to person primarily through droplets, which are released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. SWNPHD highly recommends regular handwashing and covering your cough as prevention methods.

“To have a confirmed case in December is early, considering that February is usually the peak of influenza season,” states Melissa Propp, RN, Surveillance Nurse. “Make your health a priority and get your flu shot now.”

When people get the flu they may have a sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, dry cough or muscle aches. Illness may last several days to a week or more before recovery. The flu may be especially serious for the elderly and people with diabetes, heart, lung or kidney diseases.

“Do not confuse influenza with GI virus, better known as “stomach flu”. Influenza is in your lungs. GI virus attacks your stomach and/or digestive tract “shares Propp. “The flu shot can protect you from getting influenza but it does not protect you from “stomach flu”.

Tips for Flu Prevention:

1. Stay home when you are sick, especially if you have a fever. You should be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours (without fever reducing medication) before you return to work or school.
2. GET VACCINATED EACH YEAR.
3. Avoid close contact with people who are sick or with others if you are sick.
4. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough into your inner elbow.
5. Wash your hands frequently using soap.
6. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
7. Practice other good health habits such as getting plenty of sleep and exercise, managing your stress, drinking plenty of water and eating nutritious foods.

This year’s season is just beginning, so vigilance for influenza should be taken. While epidemics of flu happen every year, the timing, severity, and length of the epidemic is unpredictable and depends on many factors, including the circulating flu viruses and the match between circulating viruses and those in the vaccine.

Facts about Influenza (flu) Vaccine:

- The influenza vaccine is recommended for **everyone over the age of 6 months**.
- It takes approximately 2 weeks to receive immunity from influenza after getting the vaccine.
- Flu season typically peaks in February.
- Now is a good time to get vaccinated.
- Vaccination is particularly important for people with underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic illnesses.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. For more information call Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's. You can also follow us on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

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