

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Influenza Cases Confirmed in Nebraska

McCook – Laboratory confirmed cases of influenza have been reported by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. 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. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) highly recommends regular handwashing and covering your cough as prevention methods.

“To have confirmed cases in October is very early, considering that February is usually the peak of influenza season,” states Tami Herskowitz, 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 “states Melissa Propp, RN at SWNPHD. “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.

SWNPHD and the CDC continue to recommend influenza vaccination for everyone 6 months and older this season. 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 complete 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.

SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow counties. Call 308-345-4223 to schedule an appointment for a flu shot. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th (one block north of Arby's) in McCook. More information can also be found on Facebook or Twitter and our website at www.swhealth.ne.gov.

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