

News Release



For more information, contact Pam Palm,
740-507-6533 or ppalm @knoxhealth.com

11660 Upper Gilchrist Rd. Mount Vernon, OH 43050
PH 740-392-2200 Fax 740-392-9613
www.knoxhealth.com

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Flu cases increase significantly in Knox County

The Knox County Health Department reports that confirmed cases of influenza have increased significantly in Knox County during the past few days with several hospitalizations.

The 2017-18 flu season in Ohio and nationally is looking similar to what was seen during the 2014-15 flu season which at the time was the most severe flu season in recent years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In Ohio, more than 2,100 people have been hospitalized so far this year compared to 350 during the same time period last year. The Ohio Department of Health reported the state's first pediatric death due to influenza on Wednesday.

CDC says that flu activity in the U.S. increased sharply during the first week of January, and is now categorized as widespread in 46 states including Ohio. Flu activity traditionally begins to increase in October and can last as late as May, with cases typically peaking between December and February.

The Knox County Health Department issued a health alert to local healthcare providers to advise them of the increased flu activity and recommended treatment from the CDC.

So far, influenza A (H3N2) viruses have been the most common flu viruses circulating this season, according to CDC. H3N2-predominant flu seasons have been associated with more severe illness, especially among children and adults age 65 and older. Vaccine effectiveness against H3N2 viruses has been around 30 percent. Vaccine effectiveness against other circulating flu viruses has been about 60 percent for H1N1 viruses, and around 50 percent for influenza B viruses. A study done on flu vaccination said that it can significantly reduce a child's risk of dying from influenza.

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Health officials say it's not too late to get a flu shot. The CDC recommends that everyone six months of age and older get a flu shot as it is the best protection against seasonable flu viruses. It takes about two weeks for a flu shot to take full effect. The health department still has flu vaccine as do several local pharmacies and doctor's offices. To schedule a flu shot at the health department, call 740-399-8008.

Symptoms of influenza 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.

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.

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