



# KANE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT MEDIA ADVISORY

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WEB SITE: [www.kanehealth.com](http://www.kanehealth.com)  
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**KANE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ENCOURAGES PUBLIC TO PAY  
EXTRA ATTENTION TO PREVENTING SPREAD OF FLU**  
*Reduced Vaccine Supply Increases Importance of Other Prevention Methods*

The vaccine supply in the United States will be about half of what was expected due to the Chiron Corporation in Britain announcing that they would not be shipping the 46-48 million doses that had been expected. This reduction in vaccine supply means that the public should take extra steps to protect themselves and others from the spread of the Influenza virus which kills an estimated 36,000 people annually in the United States and leads to the hospitalization of another 200,000 citizens.

“We take the flu seriously every year,” states Mary Lou England, executive director of the Kane County Health Department, “With less people being vaccinated, it becomes even more important to take simple steps such as proper hand washing and covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze.”

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The prevention steps recommend by the Kane County Health Department include:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water.
- Teach children to wash their hands regularly.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze, preferably with a facial tissue or your arm, not your hands. Promptly discard used facial tissues.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick, especially those most at risk for influenza complications.
- If you are sick with cough or fever, stay home from work or school until you recover.
- Contact your medical provider if you are experiencing severe symptoms that you believe require medical attention.
- Do not share things that go into the mouth, such as drinking cups, straws, etc.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces in your home including door knobs, refrigerator handle, phone and water faucets.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

“Following proper hygiene suggestions will prevent not only the flu, but also many other infections that commonly make people ill,” says Cindy Gross, Epidemiologist for the Kane County Health Department, “This flu vaccine situation, though serious, may motivate people to take the steps that may reduce illness in the long run.”

The Health Department continues to work regionally and within the community to coordinate the flu vaccine that has been delivered. Following CDC recommendations the Health Department encourages those at most risk for complications from the flu to get vaccinated if possible and encourages non-risk group individuals to forgo vaccination this year to free up vaccine for those most in need.

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Those considered to be high priority to receive vaccine include:

- Children ages 6 months to 23 months;
- Persons 65 years of age and older;
- Persons 2 to 64 years of age with underlying medical conditions;
- Pregnant women;
- Residents of long-term care facilities;
- Children ages 6 months to 18 years of age who are on long-term aspirin therapy;
- Health care workers providing direct patient care; and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age.

Influenza, commonly called the flu, is caused by viruses that infect the respiratory tract and spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Flu symptoms include fever (usually 100 degrees F in adults and often higher in children), dry cough, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue.

After a person has been infected with the virus, symptoms usually appear within one to four days. The infection is considered contagious for up to five days after symptoms appear and illness usually lingers for a week or two. Each year, an estimated 10 percent to 20 percent of the population contracts influenza.

Those who develop flu-like symptoms should drink fluids, rest and stay home. Those who have the flu may also take over-the-counter drugs such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen, but aspirin should be avoided because taking it for some forms of flu has been associated with Reye's syndrome, a serious disease in children that can occur following a viral illness and that causes swelling of the brain.

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