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ILI activity on the rise In Kane County *Get a flu shot during Vaccinate Illinois Week, December 7-13*

With influenza-like illnesses on the rise in Kane County, the Kane County Health Department, other public health departments and healthcare organizations across the state are encouraging residents to get a flu shot during Vaccinate Illinois Week, Dec. 7 - 13. Vaccinate Illinois Week is a statewide observance focused on educating the public about the importance of flu vaccine during the fall and winter months. Vaccinate Illinois Week coincides with National Influenza Vaccination Week, a national observance established to highlight the importance of continuing influenza vaccination and encourage more people to be vaccinated during the holiday season and into the new year.

Here in Kane County, we have seen increases in reported visits to the county's hospital emergency departments the last two weeks.

"While there has been an intense focus on Ebola, people shouldn't forget that influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death," said Executive Director Barbara Jeffers. "The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year."

Public health officials recommend that everyone six months of age and older should be vaccinated against influenza, especially pregnant women, young children, people 65 years of age and older, and anyone with underlying health conditions like asthma, diabetes, or a weakened immune system. A flu vaccine is needed every year because flu viruses are constantly changing.

"The CDC estimates that between 3,000 and 49,000 people in the United States die from flu related causes each flu season," Jeffers said. "Flu vaccination can reduce the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalizations and deaths."

Several flu vaccine options are available for the 2014-2015 flu season, including traditional flu vaccines made to protect against three flu viruses (called trivalent shots), and vaccines made to protect against four different flu viruses (called quadrivalent shots). An egg-free shot for those who have egg allergies has also been approved for people 18 years of age and older.

(MORE)

People with flu can spread it to others as far as 6 feet away. Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Less often, a person might also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has a flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

In addition to getting a flu shot, you can also reduce your risk by:

- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Practicing good cough etiquette, such as coughing into your elbow instead of your hands.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- Avoiding close contact with sick people. If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.

Some people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu. This includes older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and persons who live in facilities like nursing homes. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

Flu shots are available at numerous locations throughout the county. To find a flu shot clinic close to you, use the Flu Vaccine Finder by clicking [here](#). For more information, please visit our website by clicking [here](#).

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