

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Widespread Influenza Activity Occurring in Kansas
Vaccination encouraged to help prevent spread

TOPEKA, Kan. – Kansas is now experiencing widespread influenza activity, with increased influenza cases seen in most regions of the state. Reports of outbreaks in long-term care facilities, schools and day cares have been made to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). Five outbreaks have been identified during the 2016-2017 season.

"It is not too late to get your seasonal influenza vaccine," said Susan Mosier, MD, MBA, FACS, KDHE Secretary and State Health Officer. "I urge Kansans who have not yet taken this precaution to do so as soon as possible."

Nationally, this season's influenza vaccine appears to be a very good match to the circulating influenza viruses.

Influenza vaccine is recommended for nearly everyone six months of age and older. Infants less than six months of age are too young to be vaccinated and are more vulnerable to the complications from influenza. Being vaccinated against influenza is especially important for anyone at high risk of complications and for anyone who is caring for children younger than five years of age. It is also important for persons caring for those with medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe complications.

Symptoms of influenza include fever, dry cough, extreme tiredness and muscle aches. Complications can include pneumonia, ear and sinus infections and dehydration. Influenza may also worsen other chronic conditions.

Depending on the severity of the influenza season, five percent to 20 percent of the population may get influenza each year. During the peak of the 2015-2016 influenza season in Kansas, approximately three percent of all health care visits in clinics were due to influenza-like illness. Influenza or pneumonia contributed to or was the direct cause of 903 deaths among Kansas residents during the 2015-2016 influenza season. Influenza and pneumonia were eighth among leading causes of death in 2015 in Kansas.

Additional ways to avoid spreading influenza include covering your mouth when you cough and sneeze, washing your hands and staying home when you are sick.

For information on receiving the influenza vaccine, please contact your health care provider or your local health department. Please visit www.kdheks.gov/flu for influenza facts.

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KDHE's mission is to protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans.