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Ohio Weekly Flu Hospitalizations Continue to Rise

ODH medical director urges flu shots as nearly 1,000 people hospitalized

(COLUMBUS, Ohio) — The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reports that the number of new influenza-related hospitalizations rose again last week. The 994 hospitalizations from February 2 to February 8 marks a new high for the 2019-2020 flu season and a 19% increase over the previous week.

These numbers bring to 5,457 the total hospitalizations since the season began at the end of September, and are more than double the hospitalizations reported during the same week of last year's flu season. The current report can be found [here](#).

"One in 12 Americans is likely to get sick from flu this season," said ODH Medical Director Mark Hurst, MD. "The next person hospitalized could be you, your child, or another loved one. Protect yourself and everyone around you by getting a flu shot and following other precautions."

Adult flu deaths are not reported to ODH; however, two Ohio children, girls ages 11 and 16, have died from the flu this season.

The virus can be especially dangerous for people who are very young or elderly, people with compromised or weakened immune systems, people with chronic health conditions, and pregnant women. If you are in one of these categories and develop flu symptoms, Hurst advises, seek medical care right away.

Certain antiviral medications can ease flu symptoms and are especially important for people in high risk groups.

While ODH remains on vigilant watch for COVID-2019 (coronavirus disease 2019), state infectious disease experts also are monitoring flu-related activity -- from lab data to emergency department visits to thermometer sales -- in an effort to keep Ohioans healthy. They will continue to do so through the end of flu season in May.

They advise the following to help prevent flu, caused by contact with respiratory droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth after touching objects.
- Practice good habits, including disinfecting surfaces, getting plenty of sleep, and managing stress.

Symptoms typically start one to four days following exposure and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, and fatigue.

"Along with severe illness, flu can lead to missed work and education, limit family time, and diminish quality of life," Dr. Hurst said. "We encourage workplaces, schools, nursing homes, and other facilities to protect Ohioans by ramping up cleaning and disinfecting efforts and supporting other prevention habits."

You cannot get the flu from the flu shot, and it is recommended for everyone older than 6 months. If you have had issues with the flu shot before, talk to your medical provider about options that might not cause problems.

Learn more about the flu and precautions to take at www.flu.ohio.gov.

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