

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flu Updates

(Coldwater, MI). According to the Centers for Disease Control, Michigan is currently experiencing widespread flu activity throughout the state. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is reporting a significant uptick in reports of flu-like illnesses over those reported in November. According to Steve Todd, Health Officer for the tri-county health department, “While the actual number of reported flu cases since the end of November has only grown from 0 to 13 cases, the number of flu-like illnesses has more than tripled in the past six weeks, growing from 248 to 866, as of today.”

Early in January, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) notified local public health departments that many of the cases of flu currently being identified are from Type A Influenza (H3N2) strain. Seasons that are dominated by this particular strain tend to result in more severe illness and mortality, especially for older people and young children. Steve Todd adds “Complicating the season is that the predominant virus going around is genetically different than the virus that was included in this year’s seasonal flu shot. As a result, the flu vaccine may not be as effective as was hoped.”

Seasonal flu outbreaks occur every year. The CDC and the health department continue to recommend vaccination because it may result in a less severe bout of flu while still offering protection against Type B strains and H1N1 strain. The health department also offers the following steps to help manage flu symptoms:

STEPS:

1. **Stay at home and rest.** If a fever is present, stay home for at least 24 hours until the fever is gone except to get medical care. (A fever is defined as temperatures at or above 100°F or 37.8°C. Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
2. **Avoid close contact with well people so that they are not exposed to the flu.**
3. **Drink plenty of water and other clear liquids to prevent fluid loss (dehydration).**
4. **Treat fever and cough with over-the-counter medications**
5. **Visit your doctor if you or your loved one is very sick or are pregnant or have a medical condition that puts you at higher risk of flu complications** (i.e., 65 years and older, young children, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease).
6. **Take an antiviral medicine as directed, if prescribed.**

However, there are times when seeking immediate medical attention may be needed. Call for emergency care or see a doctor right away if the following warning or emergency signs occur:

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

*In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for **any infant** who has any of these signs:*

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen

- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by flu viruses. Flu viruses can cause illness, may require hospital stays and can result in death. Symptoms of flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people sick with the flu may experience all these symptoms, while others may not. Hand washing is an important measure for stopping the spread of flu. Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Also, try not to touch your face, since germs are often spread when a person touches something contaminated and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

To learn more about influenza, check out our website at www.bhsj.org and press the 'Quick Info' button at the top.

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