

NEWS RELEASE

Panhandle

Public Health District

January 23, 2017

For immediate release.

For more information, contact: *Tabi Prochazka*, 308-487-3600 ext 107 or 866-701-7173 ext 107

Influenza activity is rapidly increasing with widespread outbreaks across the state.

Panhandle Public Health District is seeing influenza activity rapidly increase.

“We are also seeing widespread outbreaks across the state in schools, long-term care facilities, hospitals, clinics, and work places,” state Melody Leisy, PPHD Public Health Nurse.

Flu is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death, and is especially dangerous for children and older adults.

During the 2015-2016 flu season, the CDC estimates that more than 15,000 children younger than 5 years old were hospitalized nationally from flu complications, like pneumonia and that more than 200 children younger than 5 years died from flu. Reports show that most children who die from flu have not been vaccinated.

Adults 65 years and older bear the greatest burden of severe flu symptoms making it especially important for older adults to get an annual flu shot. Those with chronic illnesses or other health complications are also at a higher risk for complications from the flu.

You have the power to protect yourself and your family this season with these three actions to fight flu.

1. **Get a flu vaccine.** Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine. As long as flu activity is ongoing, it's not too late to get vaccinated, even in January or later.
2. **Take everyday actions to stop the spread of germs.**
 - a. Avoid close contact with sick people
 - b. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
 - c. Cover your coughs and sneezes
 - d. Wash your hands often (with soap and water), and
 - e. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with flu viruses.
3. **Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor** prescribes them. If you get the flu, medicine called antiviral drugs can be used to treat flu illness. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder and shorten the time you are sick. They may also prevent serious flu complications.

It's not too late to get vaccinated. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection, so if you haven't already, now is the time to get your flu shot!

Learn more about how you can fight the flu this season at www.cdc.gov/fightflu. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.