

# NEWS RELEASE

December 21, 2012

For immediate release

For more information, contact: *Melody Leisy, 855-227-2217*

## Influenza Illness in the Panhandle

Panhandle medical facilities are experiencing high numbers of patients seeking medical care for upper respiratory symptoms: fever, cough and/or sore throat, body aches, fatigue. If you become ill with these influenza-like-symptoms, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people. To care for yourself at home get plenty of sleep, drink plenty of fluids, and take fever reducing medications. Most people are able to recover at home. If you have underlying health problems, consult with your medical provider. Anyone experiencing these “emergency warning signs” should seek urgent medical care: trouble breathing, not drinking enough fluids, pain or pressure in the chest, sudden dizziness, confusion, persistent vomiting, a child not waking up or not interacting, bluish skin color.

Due to an increase in respiratory illness in the community, several area hospitals are asking that children less than 18 not visit the hospital unless they are seeking medical care. If you have a sore throat, cough, fever, or nasal congestion, please do not visit other than to receive medical treatment or testing.

Becky Corman, public health nurse with Panhandle Public Health District, encourages everyone who has not been vaccinated yet to do so. “Vaccination is an easy step to protect you and your loved ones from the flu. It’s not too late to get vaccinated for this flu season and we encourage everyone to get their flu shot.” Check with your local physician or pharmacy for availability in your area. Everyone six months and older is encouraged to get a flu vaccine each year.

For additional information about flu, visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org), [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), or call PPHD at 308-262-2217 or toll-free at 855-227-2217. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious disease, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.

(side bar or box)

### **Preventing the Flu: Respiratory Influenza Virus**

Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs

*1. Avoid close contact.*

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

*2. Stay home when you are sick.*

Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.

3. *Cover your mouth and nose.*

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

4. *Wash your hands often.*

Washing your hands and the hands of your children often will help protect you from germs.

5. *Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.*

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. *Practice other good health habits.*

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

7. *Get your FLU Vaccine.*

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get vaccinated for the flu each year. A flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against the flu virus.

8. *When to seek medical attention.*

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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