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KDHE Identifies First Flu Cases Of 2010-2011 Season

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) announces that the first flu cases of the 2010-2011 flu season have been identified in Kansas. Health officials are reminding Kansans that if they've not already done so, they should get their yearly vaccination against the flu.

"Flu has arrived once again in the state. Although flu activity is normally highest around February and influenza can continue to circulate through spring, the flu can be unpredictable," said Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, Kansas State Health Officer and Director of KDHE's Division of Health. "Now is an excellent time for everyone to get vaccinated to protect themselves, their loved ones and the community."

Flu is a serious disease that can lead to complications such as pneumonia and even death. Symptoms of the flu include: fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, and muscle aches. Complications can include pneumonia, ear and sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of other chronic conditions.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that everyone ages six months and older be vaccinated. Some people, such as pregnant women, are at particularly high risk for the negative complications from flu. When an expecting mother is vaccinated, protection occurs for both the mother and unborn child. Unfortunately, influenza immunization rates among pregnant women have typically been low. Anyone caring for, or in contact with an infant less than 6 months of age should be vaccinated since these babies are too young to be vaccinated themselves and are more vulnerable to complications from influenza disease.

Healthcare workers are also an important group who should be vaccinated in order to reduce their risk of spreading the flu virus to the people in their care who are often more vulnerable to severe or even life threatening complications from the disease.

The shot is effective for reducing the chances of getting sick and of spreading the flu. Additional ways to avoid spreading flu virus include covering coughs and sneezes, washing your hands, and staying home when sick.

"Now is the time to get vaccinated to protect yourself and everyone around you," said Sue Bowden, Director of the Kansas Immunization Program. "The flu ends with you!"

For information on receiving the flu vaccine, please contact your family physician or local health department. Visit www.kdheks.gov/flu/index.html for more information.

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