



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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November 30, 2007
For Immediate Release

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Still time to get the flu shot at Dougherty County Health Department

Getting vaccinated during December and beyond still provides protection, as flu season normally peaks in January or later, says Dougherty County Health Department Nurse Manager Cheryl Henley.

"We have had flu activity in Southwest Public Health District as late as March, so it is definitely not too late to get a flu shot," Henley said. "Getting it now would help protect you during the height of the holiday season, when many people gather, travel and entertain. And while this may be the season to exchange gifts, the last thing you want to give or get from someone else is influenza."

Flu spreads mainly when people with influenza cough or sneeze, spraying germs into the air or onto surfaces. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Influenza viruses from an infected person may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five days after becoming sick. "That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick," Henley warned.

Symptoms include fever, headache, dry cough, extreme tiredness, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches, she said. Some patients also experience nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

"Complications of flu can include bacterial infections like pneumonia, ear infections, and sinus infections, dehydration and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes," said Henley, adding that more than 200,000 Americans are hospitalized with flu complications each year.

"Further, about 36,000 people die from flu every year. About 90% of the deaths are in people 65 years and older, but some deaths occur in children each year as well," she said. "We particularly encourage those at high risk for complications to get flu shots."

Those most at risk include:

- Children 6 months to five years of age
- People 50 and older
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

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