



Panhandle Health District

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Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flu Season Arrives in North Idaho: Flu Shots Still Available

HAYDEN, ID – Panhandle Health District is reminding people in North Idaho that it's not too late to get their annual flu shot. Epidemiologists are seeing an increase in specimens testing positive for influenza in local hospitals and clinics.

“We’re finally seeing an uptick in flu cases,” said Jeff Lee, Staff Epidemiologist at Panhandle Health District. “Similar to the rest of the country, our communities are experiencing a late start to flu season.”

Historically, flu season starts as early as October and is typically over by late February, but the timing and severity of flu season is unpredictable.

Lee continues, “If you haven’t gotten your flu shot, it’s not too late. We expect to see more reports of patients sick with the flu over the next several weeks, and the flu vaccine is the best way to cut your risk of illness.”

The CDC recommends a flu vaccine for everyone over six months old. Those most at risk for serious flu-related illness, hospitalization and death are pregnant women, young children, people age 65 and older, and anyone with chronic medical conditions. Since the flu virus can spread to family members through coughing or sneezing, it is especially important that family members and people who regularly come in contact with young children or high-risk individuals get a flu shot.

Vaccine supply is adequate this year, and is offered at Panhandle Health District and also in doctors’ offices, clinics, and pharmacies. Along with getting vaccinated, there are simple every day actions you can take to help keep illness from spreading:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve every time you sneeze or cough.
- Wash your hands often and well with soap and water. Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Keep hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home from work, school or public places when you're sick.

Symptoms of influenza are similar to those of the common cold, but generally come on more swiftly and are more pronounced. Symptoms typically include fever, headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and body aches. Antiviral medications can lessen the symptoms and shorten the duration of the flu. If you experience these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider.

There has been one flu-related death reported in North Idaho during the 2015-16 flu season. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that influenza causes an average of 200,000 hospitalizations and thousands of deaths each year in the United States.

For more information about flu vaccination, prevention, and treatment visit Panhandle Health District's website at www.panhandlehealthdistrict.org.

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