



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 11-29-07

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Flu season is fast approaching

Are you protected?

STANTON~ Falling temperatures and falling snow signal the start of winter but also reminds us that the dreaded flu season is right around the corner. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone ages 6 months and older get a seasonal flu shot. Are you protected?

Influenza causes approximately 36,000 deaths nationwide each year and causes many more to be hospitalized. "Hospitalizations due to influenza are as common in children under one year of age as they are in people over 65 years of age," states Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MDHD).

The main way that flu is spread is from person to person through coughs and sneezes. This can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person travel through the air and reach the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sometimes flu can be spread when a person touches droplets, nose drainage or saliva from an infected person, or a soiled object, and then touches one's own (or someone else's) nose or mouth before washing their hands.

Getting your seasonal flu shot is just one of many things you can do to stay healthy this winter. MMDHD offers the following tips:

- **Stay home from school or work if you have a respiratory infection.**
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue whenever you cough or sneeze. And then throw the tissue away. Wash your hands afterwards with soap and water.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Clean your hands often – with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based, waterless hand sanitizer.
- If you have an infant, don't expose him or her unnecessarily to large crowds during flu season and avoid close contact (holding, kissing) with family members who may have influenza (fever, muscle aches, runny nose, cough) or other respiratory infections.
- Do not share anything that goes into the mouth such as drinking cups and straws.
- Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (door knob, refrigerator handle, phone, water faucets) if someone in the house has a cold or flu.
- Do not smoke.
- Eat healthy.
- Get plenty of exercise.
- Get at least eight hours of sleep a night.

Contact the Mid-Michigan District Health Department with any questions or for more information at 989-875-3681 (Gratiot County), 989-831-5237(Montcalm County) or visit www.mmdhd.org.

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