



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 1-2-15

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Influenza hitting long term care facilities and emergency departments

Stanton, MI- It may be a new year, but last year's influenza continues to be a serious, unpredictable threat that can turn deadly, especially for those most vulnerable.

An increase in influenza outbreaks is being reported from long-term care facilities and other group settings in our area. Emergency rooms are also being bombarded by people with influenza and influenza-like illnesses. Symptoms include high fever, chills, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches.

The problem is compounded by the fact that staff are sick at the same time. Long term care facilities are responding by curtailing group activities and having staff who are working with sick people avoid contact with those who are healthy. Hospitals are developing plans to keep beds open to absorb the influx of influenza patients.

It is best to avoid visiting long-term care facilities right now, and if you are sick, stay home from work. If your kids are sick, keep them home from school or daycare. Also, hospital emergency departments are currently overcrowded, so it's a good place to avoid, unless of course, it's an emergency.

One reason the flu is so bad this year is because it is not a good match for the H3N2 strain. The Health Department says it is still a good idea to get a shot, because it will still protect you from H1N1 and influenza B. And it will likely make your symptoms milder if you do get H3N2. For those at high-risk for developing serious flu complications, such as the elderly, young children, pregnant women, those with weakened immune systems, and people with certain health conditions, vaccination is especially important.

The vaccine is available at a variety of places, including your doctor's office, many pharmacies, or MMDHD.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department participates with the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program for uninsured and under-insured children, as well as many types of insurance plans. Please call your nearest branch office for more information, to schedule an appointment:

Clinton County Branch Office (1307 E. Townsend Road, St. Johns): 989-224-2195

Gratiot County Branch Office (5151 Commerce Drive, Ithaca): 989-875-3681

Montcalm County Branch Office (615 N. State Street, Stanton): 989-831-5237

For additional information about flu vaccinations, prevention tips and treatment, please visit www.mmdhd.org.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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