

DATE: February 29, 2016 **END DATE:** March 18, 2016

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RE: Increase in Influenza – Flu Season

Genesee County has seen a significant increase in influenza cases over the past two weeks. With the current dramatic weather changes, it is predicted that case numbers will continue to increase. Influenza (the flu) is a respiratory viral illness that can cause fever, cough, chills, headaches, muscle aches, runny nose and sore throat. With true influenza a fever is almost always present and the cough is often severe. Influenza symptoms normally last 2 to 7 days. Influenza is not the same as the “stomach flu,” which is a gastrointestinal illness causing severe nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea that usually lasts about 1 to 2 days.

The influenza virus spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes, causing droplets containing the virus to spread in the air. Uninfected people can become infected by being in close contact with these droplets and breathing them in or by touching surfaces the droplets fell onto.

There are many things that can be done to keep our schools, homes and communities ‘flu-free’ and protect ourselves and our loved ones:

1. Get vaccinated! Its not too late! Influenza vaccine is widely available.
2. As a general rule, stay home when ill. Remain home until fever-free for at least 24 hours without using fever reducing medication.
3. Wash hands with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds often.
4. Cough or sneeze into upper shirt sleeve or elbow – avoid coughing into hands!
5. Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth. That’s how germs enter the body.

Most people recover from the flu at home without medical assistance. If your symptoms persist or are severe, consult your family physician. If the following warning signs are present, seek prompt medical attention:

Emergency Warnings In Adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Not drinking enough fluids or not urinating
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Emergency Warning Signs In Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids or not urinating
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

The Genesee County Health Department wants you to stay healthy this flu season. Visit our website at www.gchd.us or visit www.fluiq.org for more flu resources and information. If you have not yet received your flu shot, we encourage you to get one. To find a flu clinic near you go to www.flu.gov or talk to your healthcare provider.