

MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: **Spread Holiday Cheer, Not Disease**

While the holiday season is in full swing, the Genesee County Health Department wants residents sharing cookies and presents, not disease. The two best ways to protect yourself and your family from contracting disease this holiday season are vaccination and practicing good hand-washing technique. Influenza, pertussis, and chickenpox are diseases that can be prevented through vaccination. The Genesee County Health Department would like to remind residents of the importance of vaccinations and the role they play in ensuring public health.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. Symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle ache, runny nose, and sore throat. It is important to get a yearly flu vaccination because protection can wane and circulating flu strains can change from year to year. Most people who get the flu recover in a week or two. However, the flu can cause complications, especially in older adults and people with other health conditions, including chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease.

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is on the rise this year. While infants are most at risk, adults and children who have not been fully immunized against pertussis can also be at risk. Pertussis, caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*, can be spread through sneezing and coughing.



Symptoms include: sneezing, runny nose, mild dry cough and low-grade fever. After about 1 to 2 weeks, more serious “coughing spells” develop that can last for more than a minute and result in difficulty breathing. At the end of a coughing spell, the individual may make a high pitched “whooping” sound as they try to catch their breath. Sometimes the coughing will cause vomiting.

Chickenpox is a highly-contagious viral infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It is spread easily from person to person, and causes a blister-like rash, itching, tiredness and fever. The rash usually first appears on the stomach, back and face, and can spread over the entire body causing itchy blisters. Chickenpox can lead to serious and occasionally life-threatening complications, especially in babies, adults, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems, but people of all ages are susceptible.

To protect yourself from disease, the Genesee County Health Department recommends the following:

- Stay up-to-date on vaccinations.
- Practice good cough hygiene by using a tissue, upper sleeve, or elbow, not your hands.
- Wash your hands regularly. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Stay home if you develop symptoms of influenza, pertussis, or chickenpox.

The Genesee County Health Department wants you to stay healthy this holiday season. Visit our website at www.gchd.us or call (810) 237-4540 to make a vaccination appointment.

Genesee County Health Department. Your Health. Our Work.

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