

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT



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Influenza Virus Sickens Many; Number of Hospitalizations Continues to Rise

WELD COUNTY, CO — The current strains of influenza virus (also known as the flu) continue to cause sickness in Weld County. “The flu is highly contagious and different from a cold,” says Mark Wallace, MD, MPH, Executive Director of the Weld County Health Department. “Flu symptoms can start suddenly and may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, or fatigue.” Serious cases of the flu can require hospitalization.

County surveillance shows a total of 78 hospitalizations for the 2017-2018 influenza season; with 47 people hospitalized in the month of December. Compared to last season, there were only 8 people hospitalized in December. Since the start of 2018, there are over 22 people hospitalized in less than a week into the month of January. The current dominant circulating flu type is Type A, with 55 hospitalizations, compared to Type B, with only 7. The current flu season officially began in October 2017 and ends in May 2018. Currently, there are no pediatric flu-associated deaths reported in Weld County or in Colorado. Statewide, there are over 1,200 flu-related hospitalizations.

The Health Department recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. While there are many different flu virus strains, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the main strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. The flu vaccine is available at pharmacies, medical providers, and the Health Department. There is not a vaccine shortage and the vaccine can still provide protection for the remaining flu season, which extends into May.

Dr. Wallace further recommends people always cover their coughs, wash their hands, and if people get sick with the flu, to stay home from work or school to prevent spreading the illness to others. The Health Department also recommends people keep their immune system healthy by eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, getting physical activity like walking outdoors, and adequate sleep.

To learn more about influenza, visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

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