



Jefferson County PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Early Outbreak of Seasonal Influenza A Confirmed in Carthage Area

Watertown, NY, November 1, 2012 ~ The Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS) is reporting **47** cases of Influenza A and influenza like illness in the Carthage area. Reports of Influenza A this early in the flu season are unusual. As a result, the JCPHS is urging everyone 6 months of age and older to receive a yearly influenza vaccination as soon as possible.

Influenza vaccinations are available at area pharmacies and many provider offices. Vaccination is the easiest and most effective way to prevent the flu. The flu vaccine takes about two weeks after vaccination for the antibodies to provide protection against influenza virus infection. Until then, you are still at risk for getting the flu.

The JCPHS strongly advises the public to take common sense precautions to prevent exposure to influenza, including:

- Children should not return to school until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius, measured by mouth) or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Stay home when ill with influenza-like illness: fever greater than 100°F accompanied by any one of the following - sore throat, runny nose/nasal congestion, or cough.
- Individuals with underlying medical problems who are experiencing flu-like illness should call their health care provider immediately for further guidance.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough, sneeze, or spit. Throw tissue in the trash after you use it. When you cough or sneeze and you have no tissues, sneeze into the inside fold of your elbow.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- In addition – try to stay in good general health – get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods.

CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get a seasonal flu vaccine. Children aged 6 months through 8 years of age who have never received a seasonal flu vaccine need to get two doses of vaccine spaced at least 4 weeks apart. This season, other children in this age group may need

two doses as well. The flu is more dangerous than the common cold for children. Each year, many children get sick with seasonal influenza.

- Children commonly need medical care because of influenza, especially before they turn 5 years old.
- Severe influenza complications are most common in children younger than 2 years old. **The best way to protect children younger than 6 months is to make sure members of their household and their caregivers are vaccinated.**
- Children with chronic health problems like asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system are at especially high risk of developing serious flu complications.
- Each year an average of 20,000 children in the US under the age of 5 are hospitalized because of influenza complications.

Other groups of people are at "high risk" of serious complications from seasonal influenza. These include people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions.

For more information concerning influenza visit www.flu.gov or www.jcphs.org.

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