



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 10, 2013

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Flu Widespread in Arizona

After an early start to the flu season, Arizona flu activity hit widespread this week; widespread is the highest category possible. Influenza has been reported in 14 of the 15 counties. Doctors' visits for influenza or influenza-like illnesses have steadily increased over the last few weeks. There has also been an increase in hospital admissions, especially in the central part of the state.

Influenza is a serious viral illness with symptoms that is similar to the common cold. However, the flu comes on quickly and is more physically draining. For most people, the best care is to stay home, rest, and drink plenty of fluids. For others, especially those with underlying conditions, it can be more severe.

If you feel you have the flu, you can check with your healthcare provider. If you are having severe issues like the inability to breathe or are dizzy, you may want to seek immediate medical attention. At this time of year, urgent care sites and hospitals are dealing with many illnesses. A few of our licensed medical facilities are on "Divert or Caution" meaning that they are at or near capacity with sick folks.

The good news is if you haven't been sick yet, the flu shot can still offer you protection from influenza. Simple, everyday prevention measures will help stop flu and other illnesses.

"Be sure to take common sense prevention steps such as hand washing frequently, staying home when you're sick, and coughing into a sleeve or tissue to prevent the spread of germs," said Dr. Cara Christ, Chief Medical Director for Health Services. "And get your flu shot – they're available almost everywhere these days. The flu shot won't protect you if you are already sick or from other illness."

While Arizona typically sees most of its flu cases in February or March, flu can be unpredictable and can peak either earlier or later in the season. This year, flu reports started early and have been increasing over the past few weeks. Approximately 1,000 cases of the almost 2,200 we've had this season were reported last week. However, because many people are not tested for the flu, those figures are likely just a fraction of the true number of cases.

Arizona is not alone in this uptick of influenza -- 41 other states reported widespread activity last week. The official Centers for Disease Control and Prevention influenza season begins in October and carries through the following September.

A list of flu shot providers is available at www.stopthespreadaz.org or by calling Community Information and Referral at 211 from anywhere in the state. For more information about influenza, go to www.azdhs.gov/flu or contact your health care provider or local health department.

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