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Influenza Update: Reported Cases Continue to Rise Statewide

ADHS Urges Everyone to Take Precautions to Prevent the Spread As Kids Return to School

PHOENIX – The Arizona Department of Health Services released data today that shows influenza activity continues to rise statewide. There have been 11,515 cases of influenza reported this season, with 2,455 reported between December 31, 2017 and January 6, 2018. Compared to the 2016-2017 flu season, there were 1,109 total cases and 275 weekly cases reported for the same time period last year.

“As kids return to school from winter break, we expect influenza cases to significantly increase,” said Dr. Cara Christ, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. “Parents should make sure their kids are vaccinated and keep them home from school if they have flu-like illness or symptoms. Due to the severity of this year’s influenza season, it is critical that everyone is taking precautions to prevent the spread, including getting vaccinated right away, staying home when you’re sick, washing your hands frequently, covering your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, and avoiding touching your face.”

Arizona hospitals statewide continue to experience long emergency room wait times due to the increased number of sick Arizonans. After consultation and request from healthcare and public health partners, ADHS is advising ill people to only seek emergency medical care if they are at high risk for serious complications or are experiencing severe symptoms. People with mild symptoms or at lower risk from complications from influenza should stay home and rest or call their healthcare provider.

“If you’re at high risk or have symptoms such as difficulty breathing, chest pain, dizziness, confusion, persistent vomiting, cannot drink fluids, or have flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever or worse cough, seek emergency medical care immediately,” Dr. Christ said.

People at high risk of serious complications from influenza are:

- Children younger than 5 years old
- Adults aged 65 and older
- People with chronic disease, especially heart and lung disease
- People with immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by HIV infection
- Women who are pregnant or postpartum (within 2 weeks after delivery)
- People younger than 19 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- American Indians/Alaska Natives
- People with extreme obesity
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities

Getting vaccinated against influenza is the most effective way to protect yourself from the disease. It can take up to two weeks to build full immunity to influenza after you are vaccinated, so everyone needs to get the flu shot immediately. People can find a place to get vaccinated at vaccinefinder.org.

For more questions about the influenza vaccine, contact the ADHS Immunization Program Office at (602) 364-3630 or your [county health department](#). You can stay up-to-date on influenza activity in Arizona throughout the season by viewing the weekly reports on the ADHS website at azhealth.gov/flu, or by subscribing to receive the influenza report via email at azhealth.gov/email.

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The award-winning, nationally recognized Arizona Department of Health Services is responsible for leading Arizona’s public health system including responding to disease outbreaks, licensing health and childcare facilities, operating the Arizona State Hospital, and improving the overall health and wellness of all Arizonans.

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