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KDHE Recommends Flu Vaccine Ahead of 2018-2019 Influenza Season Estimated 5-20 percent of the population may get influenza each year

TOPEKA – Influenza season is rapidly approaching in the United States and Kansas. While activity remains low, influenza cases have already been reported to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE).

Although the flu vaccine can vary in how well it works, it is the best way to prevent flu illness and serious flu complications, including those that can result in hospitalization and death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends receiving the **vaccine before influenza activity begins in your community, ideally by the end of October.**

“The influenza vaccine is recommended for nearly everyone six months of age or older. Being vaccinated against influenza is especially important for anyone at high risk of complications, including babies and young children, pregnant women, older persons and people with certain chronic conditions,” said Dr. Farah Ahmed, State Epidemiologist, KDHE. “Getting vaccinated also protects people around you, so getting vaccinated is important for persons caring for young children and those caring for persons with medical conditions that put them at a higher risk of severe complications.”

Depending on the severity of the influenza season, 5-20 percent of the population may get influenza each year. Symptoms of influenza include fever, dry cough, extreme tiredness and muscle aches. Complications can include pneumonia, ear and sinus infections and dehydration; influenza may also worsen other chronic conditions.

In addition to receiving the flu vaccine, the following actions are recommended to help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu:

- Wash your hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing.

2017-2018 Influenza Season Statistics

During the peak of the 2017-18 influenza season in Kansas, approximately 12 percent of all health care visits in sentinel clinics were due to influenza-like illness. Influenza or pneumonia contributed to or was the direct cause of almost 1,600 deaths among Kansas residents during the 2017-18 influenza season. More information on influenza surveillance in Kansas for the 2017-18 season can be found at <http://www.kdheks.gov/flu/surveillance.htm>.

For information about receiving the influenza vaccine, please contact your health care provider or your local health department. Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm> for more information on influenza.

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