



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Doug Hogan
502-564-7042, ext. 3467

Barbara Fox
502-564-6786, ext.3102

Kentucky Flu Activity Level is Widespread Consecutive Week *Public Health Urges Vaccination and Hand Washing for Kentuckians*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 21, 2017) - Department for Public Health (DPH) officials, within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), now report “widespread” flu for the first time this flu season. Widespread activity is the highest level of flu activity, which indicates increased flu-like activity or flu outbreaks in at least half of the regions in the state.

The traditional flu season lasts from October through May. Increased flu activity began earlier this season than usual in Kentucky. Due to the early increased activity this year, both in Kentucky and nationally, increased flu activity is anticipated to continue for several months.

“With current widespread flu activity being reported in Kentucky, it is still a good time to protect yourself and your family by getting a flu shot,” said Dr. Jeffrey D. Howard, acting DPH commissioner. “The Department for Public Health is strongly urging anyone who hasn’t received a flu vaccine, particularly children 6 months and older and those people at high risk for complications related to the flu, to check with local health departments or other providers about getting the vaccine.”

Flu can be very contagious. Infection with the flu virus can cause fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing and body aches. Persons who develop flu symptoms should seek medical advice about the need for a medical evaluation or

treatment with an antiviral drug, which could shorten the course of the illness or reduce its severity.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers these tips to stop the spread of germs:

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.

Young children and those who are elderly or have chronic disease are especially vulnerable to the flu's more severe consequences. It takes about 2 weeks following the administration of the vaccine for the recipient to develop protection from the flu. There are ample supplies available throughout the state. Vaccinations are available at Kentucky's local health departments, pharmacies, and medical providers. Many health plans cover the cost of the vaccine with no copay. Kentuckians are advised to call before arriving for a vaccination.

DPH officials report weekly to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) national flu surveillance system. The weekly report is now available online at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/epi/Influenza.htm> and is updated each Friday before noon.

-30-

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.