

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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Influenza Beginning to Spread in Wyoming

With flu activity going up recently across the state, residents are encouraged by the Wyoming Department of Health to take common-sense steps to avoid becoming ill with influenza or spreading it to others.

According to Reggie McClinton, surveillance epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health, influenza activity has increased across the state in recent weeks. “While we are not seeing as many cases as this time last year, reported influenza activity is definitely picking up,” he said. “The area of highest activity right now is Campbell County.”

Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health, said basic common-sense measures can help slow or prevent influenza’s spread. “Covering your mouth and nose with your sleeve or a tissue when you sneeze and cough; frequently washing your hands; and staying home from work, school, day care and errands when you are ill can help,” Murphy said.

Flu vaccines are also available in many locations. “We are not yet seeing widespread community transmission or the likely peak of flu activity for the season, so for most people it is still a good time to get vaccinated,” Murphy said

Murphy reminded people that it takes up to two weeks for flu vaccines to offer effective protection. Those exposed to the flu during that time may still become ill. “Some people blame the vaccine for making them ill, but that is not the case,” he said.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. Symptoms include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. Influenza can sometimes cause severe illness and complications, and sometimes death.

Doctors may recommend prescription antiviral medications to help treat influenza. Prescription antiviral medications may be especially helpful for persons at higher risk for complications from flu such as young children, adults 65 years of age or older, persons with chronic medical conditions, persons with altered immune systems, women who are pregnant or soon after delivery, persons less than 19 years of age who are on long-term aspirin therapy for other conditions, those who are extremely overweight, and residents of nursing homes or other chronic-care facilities. “For antiviral medications to be a good option, it is important to seek medical care quickly,” Murphy advised.

Murphy said residents who become ill should get lots of rest, drink plenty of liquids and avoid using alcohol or tobacco. “You may also take medications to relieve your symptoms, but avoid giving products containing aspirin to children or teens with flu-like symptoms,” he said.

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