

DHHS - Flu Activity Increasing Across The State

By Administrator

Friday, 08 February 2019 10:00 -

Influenza activity is rising in North Carolina as we move closer to the peak of the 2018-19 flu season. Although vaccination early in the season is preferred, it is never too late to get vaccinated and help protect yourself and others from the spread of this dangerous, sometimes deadly virus.

Six influenza-associated deaths were reported during the week ending on Feb. 2, and the total number of influenza-associated deaths reported this season is now 35.

This does not represent all flu-associated deaths in the state, since many go undiagnosed or unreported.

“Flu will be circulating, and infection rates will likely remain high at least for the next several weeks,” said State Epidemiologist Zack Moore, MD, MPH. “Getting vaccinated now is the best way to protect yourself and those you come in contact with.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against the flu for everyone 6 months and older. In addition to reducing the risk of infection, vaccination against the flu can make illness milder for those who do get sick and reduces the risk of more serious outcomes. Flu vaccinations are available at hospitals, pharmacies, private medical offices, some federally qualified health care centers and local health departments.

The number of flu-associated deaths reported in North Carolina since 2009 has varied from nine during the 2011–2012 season to 391 during the 2017–2018 season. This serves as a reminder that flu can be a serious illness, especially for adults over age 65, children under five, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease.

Everyone should use precautions to protect against the spread of flu and other viruses, including:

- Wash hands frequently, preferably with soap and water or an approved hand sanitizer
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then discard the tissue promptly
- If you are sick with flu, staying home until you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours

Anyone who thinks they have the flu should contact their doctor right away to see if they need treatment with a prescription antiviral drug, such as Tamiflu. Early treatment with an antiviral drug can help prevent flu infections from becoming more serious. Treatment with a prescription antiviral drug is especially important for hospitalized patients, people with severe flu illness and those who are at high risk of serious flu complications based on their age or health.

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For more information, including weekly updates on flu surveillance data and to find out where you can get a flu vaccination in your community, visit www.flu.nc.gov.