



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

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MDCH Concerned about Severe Flu Activity: Urges Individuals to Get Vaccinated

LANSING – Influenza activity is on the rise both nationwide and in all regions of Michigan. Public health officials are noticing an increase in patients of all ages being admitted to hospitals for serious influenza disease. To date, a larger proportion of these hospitalizations are occurring in young and middle-age adults as compared with most influenza seasons. In addition, one pediatric influenza-associated death has already been reported in Michigan during this influenza season.

Although the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) does not require reporting of adult influenza deaths, at least six deaths have been reported as of Dec. 21, 2013. Currently, more than 90 percent of positive influenza specimens at the MDCH Bureau of Laboratories are the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. During the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, severe disease was also seen in young and middle-age adults. Patients with underlying medical conditions or obesity have an increased risk for severe complications from this virus.

"Flu has already come to Michigan this season, causing an unusually high number of severe cases and hospitalizations for this time of year," said Dr. Matthew Davis, Chief Medical Executive with the MDCH. "Vaccination is a very effective way to protect ourselves and our communities against flu, every year. Even though flu has already come to Michigan in December, we expect this is just the beginning of the flu season that will likely last for the next few months. That means that now is the best time for Michiganders to get vaccinated against flu -- from ages 6 months on up."

Any flu infection carries a risk of serious complications, hospitalization or death, even among healthy children and adults. Last flu season (2012-2013), national estimates showed only 40.8 percent of Michigan's residents were vaccinated against flu. According to Michigan's immunization registry, only 9 percent of residents ages 18-24 and 11 percent of residents between 25-49 received flu vaccine. Michigan lags behind U.S. estimates for flu vaccine coverage in every age group and ranks 42nd in the nation for flu vaccine coverage.

Michigan residents can get vaccinated at their health care provider offices, local health departments, or pharmacies. As long as flu viruses are circulating and causing illness, vaccination can provide protection against the flu. Even unvaccinated people who have already been sick with one flu virus can still benefit from vaccination since the flu vaccine protects against three or four different flu viruses that are expected to circulate each season.

MDCH is encouraging college health centers, medical practices, health departments, pharmacists, and other immunization providers to routinely assess the vaccine needs of all their patients, including young and middle-aged adults, and make a strong recommendation for flu vaccination. Residents are encouraged to visit <http://flushot.healthmap.org> to find a flu vaccination location near them. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/flu.

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