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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ohio Department of Health Warns that Flu Activity in Ohio is Increasing

ODH Encourages Ohioans to Get Influenza Vaccine

COLUMBUS – Influenza activity is on the rise in Ohio and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is encouraging Ohioans to get their influenza vaccine.

Although Ohio is currently experiencing minimal influenza-like illness activity compared to what is being seen in other parts of the country, there are signs that activity in the state is increasing. So far this flu season, 338 influenza-associated hospitalizations have been reported to ODH, primarily in northeast Ohio.

“The flu virus will be less likely to spread if more people are vaccinated,” said ODH Director, Dr. Ted Wymyslo. “Immunization has proven to be the safest and most effective way to fight the flu so I encourage all Ohioans to get vaccinated. Moreover, it takes two weeks to build up immunity after receiving the vaccine, which is another reason to get immunized as soon as possible.”

Symptoms of influenza can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Influenza should not be taken lightly. Although most people fully recover from the flu, a small portion of people do experience severe illness (like pneumonia and respiratory failure), and sometimes the flu can be fatal. Anyone who becomes ill with the flu and is pregnant, has an underlying medical condition or experiences a particularly severe form of the illness should contact their healthcare provider immediately.

In Ohio, as in the rest of the country, most of the flu circulating now is H1N1, which disproportionately affects young and middle-aged adults. However, seasonal flu viruses may become more prominent as the season continues. This year’s vaccine contains both H1N1 and seasonal flu strains so those who become immunized will have an increased degree of protection against multiple kinds of flu.

While pandemic H1N1 flu has an unusually strong impact on teenagers and young adults, those at highest risk for complications from seasonal flu – including children 6 months and younger, pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions and the elderly – should also remember the importance of protecting themselves. Healthcare workers and caretakers of young children and the elderly are also encouraged to get vaccinated.

While vaccine provides the greatest protection against the flu, other effective measures include: washing hands frequently, or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer; covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, or coughing or sneezing into elbows; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; and staying home when sick and until fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.

Flu vaccine is available at most healthcare providers’ offices, local health departments and retail pharmacy chains. For more information on influenza, including where to find vaccine, visit the “Flu Season in Ohio” feature at www.odh.ohio.gov.

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