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MEDIA CONTACT:
Julia Ruschmann
872-4455 ext 1369
Sandon Speedling, ext. 1110

FLU SEASON Prevention and Protection Tips

Bay County – The Florida Department of Health urges residents and visitors to take precautions to protect themselves and their families during flu season. Roughly 36,000 individuals in the U.S. die annually from influenza and related complications. In 2010, over 2,000 people in Florida died from influenza and pneumonia – 26 of whom were from Bay County (CHARTS, 2010). In our area, seasonal flu is most common January through March when the weather is colder. The seasonal flu replicates better in cold weather, which makes it easier to spread. Of course, flu seasons are unpredictable and can start early or run late. The flu is highly contagious, but there are ways to avoid it. Being vaccinated is critical, but there are other simple steps that can help keep the flu out of your way.

How Do You Prevent the Flu?

Follow these simple steps to prevent the flu:

- Wash your hands often - The most common way to catch the flu is to touch your own eyes, nose or mouth with germ-y hands. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Keep your hands away from your face
- Keep your distance when you are sick
- Keep your distance if you are around someone else who is sick
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue. Then properly dispose of the tissue.
- Avoid being around others for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone to keep others from getting sick.
- Stay hydrated. Individuals should drink about two liters of water a day on a regular basis.
- Get between seven and nine hours of sleep nightly. Exhaustion commonly contributes to getting sick.

How Do You Know if it is the Flu?

Typical flu symptoms include:

- High Fever (102-104 degrees F) for 3-4 days
- Headache
- Body aches and pains
- Fatigue and weakness that may last up to 2-3 weeks
- Early and significant exhaustion
- Cough and chest discomfort which may become severe
- Occasional stuffy nose, sneezing, and sore throat

What to Do if You Get the Flu?

Follow these simple steps if you do get the flu to feel better faster.

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Get plenty of rest
- Sleep and take it easy
- Take acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Advil or Motrin) to relieve your fever and aches
- Over-the-counter cold or cough medicines may also relieve some flu symptoms, check with your doctor
- Do not take aspirin products without physician approval
- Consider layered apparel for body temperature changes
- Wash your hands frequently
- Don't share cups and eating utensils

Most people who get the flu recover without having to see their doctor. If your flu symptoms worsen, or if you have a high temperature for more than a few days, or if you seem better but then feel worse, call your doctor right away.

The Bay County Health Department urges residents and visitors to get their flu shot now if they have not already done so. The public is invited to come to the health department anytime between 7:30am-3:30pm Monday through Friday to get the vaccine. No appointments are needed and services will be provided on a walk-in first come, first served basis. Children ages 18 and under receive the vaccine at no cost. The cost for the regular flu vaccine for adults is \$29. A high dose flu vaccine specifically for individuals 65 years and older is also available at a cost of \$42. Cash, check, Visa, MasterCard and Medicare are accepted. Additionally, Pneumococcal vaccine is available and recommended for persons at increased risk for serious Pneumococcal infection, including those age 2 years or older with certain chronic medical conditions and all persons aged 65 years or older.

For more information, visit:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <http://www.flu.gov>

The Bay County Health Department website: <http://www.baycountyhealth.org>

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