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Flu-like activity increases sharply NIPHC agencies recommend vaccination as the best protection

The member agencies of the Northern Illinois Public Health Consortium (NIPHC) would like to advise residents that seasonal flu activity has increased sharply in recent weeks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is reporting that influenza-like-illness activity is widespread across most of the country, including Illinois. CDC's latest surveillance data shows current ILI activity is similar to what was seen during the peak of the 2014-2015 season; the most severe in recent years.

Seasonal influenza, or flu, is a contagious respiratory virus that can cause mild to severe illness. Symptoms of the flu virus include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. Flu is spread primarily when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

"The CDC recommends everyone 6 months and older get vaccinated," said Dr. Terry Mason, NIPHC President and Chief Operating Officer of the Cook County Department of Public Health. "We know the best way to protect yourself and your family from getting sick is by getting the flu shot. The vaccine prevents millions of illnesses and tens of thousands of hospitalizations every year, and can lessen the severity of symptoms."

In addition to getting the flu shot, follow these simple steps to help prevent the spread of the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)

More information about flu prevention is available from the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>, or from your local health department.

NIPHC is a point of collaboration and exchange of information for local health departments in the northern Illinois region to promote health, prevent disease and protect communities. The consortium also works to raise public awareness, build constituencies and shape legislation and policies that affect public health in the region. Please see <http://www.niphc.org/>

