

Flu Activity Up In Kansas

Though influenza activity has remained lower than usual in Kansas this season, activity has been steadily increasing over the last several weeks with the latest weekly influenza surveillance report showing Kansas with “widespread” flu-like illness.

For the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to identify a state as “widespread,” the outbreaks of influenza or increases in influenza-like illness cases and recent laboratory-confirmed influenza are in at least half the regions of the state with recent laboratory evidence of influenza in that state.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment identified the first laboratory-confirmed influenza cases of the 2011-2012 flu season on Dec. 21. Symptoms of influenza include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, and muscle aches. Complications can include pneumonia, ear and sinus infections, and dehydration; influenza may also worsen other chronic conditions.

Influenza vaccination is effective for reducing the chances of getting sick and spreading influenza to others. Additional ways to avoid spreading influenza include covering coughs and sneezes, washing your hands and staying home when sick.

All persons six months and older are recommended to receive an annual influenza vaccine. This is especially important for anyone at high risk of complications or who is caring for, or in regular contact with, an infant less than six months of age. Babies this age are too young to be vaccinated and are more vulnerable to the complications from influenza disease.

On average, five to 20 percent of the U.S. population contracts influenza yearly and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized with complications. Older people, pregnant women, young children, and people with certain health conditions are at high risk for serious complications. Serious complications of the influenza can lead to pneumonia and even death.

For information on receiving the influenza vaccine, please contact your health care provider or the local health department.