



Statewide News Release

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New Influenza Resource Available

Online report highlights weekly influenza activity in Kentucky

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 20, 2017) – Officials with the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), announce the availability of an online weekly influenza surveillance report used to gauge current flu activity circulating in Kentucky. This new public service is an example of the Cabinet’s priority to strengthen data collection and analytics and then to make the information more easily accessible.

The Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report is compiled by DPH officials and provided to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as part of statewide flu surveillance efforts. The weekly report is located at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/epi/Influenza.htm> and will be updated each Friday before noon.

Influenza cases are broken down by specific age groups and counties, the number of deaths resulting from influenza and the current influenza activity level being reported in the state. The report consists of laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza that are defined by molecular virus testing and positive virus culture test results, which are reportable in Kentucky. Rapid positive influenza tests are not included in this report.

DPH relies on sites such as doctors’ offices, hospitals and health departments to help track the level of influenza activity in the state and to identify which strains of the flu are circulating in Kentucky. These voluntary sites collect data and report influenza-like illness (ILI) cases according to age groups each week. This sampling represents only a small percentage of influenza cases for the state, but contributes to the ongoing assessment of flu activity in the Commonwealth and helps determine the weekly level of flu activity.

Kentucky’s current flu activity level is classified as “sporadic,” with 18 confirmed cases of flu being reported. Sporadic activity indicates that small numbers of laboratory-confirmed influenza cases or a single laboratory-confirmed influenza outbreak have been reported, but there is no increase in cases of ILI.

The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends flu vaccine for all individuals six months of age and older. People who are strongly encouraged to receive the flu vaccine because they may be at higher risk for complications or negative consequences include:

- Children age six months through 59 months;
- Women who are or will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- Persons 50 years of age or older;
- Persons with extreme obesity (Body Mass Index of 40 or greater);
- Persons aged six months and older with chronic health problems;
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;
- Household contacts (including children) and caregivers of children aged ≤59 months (i.e., aged <five years, particularly contacts of children aged <five years, particularly contacts of children aged <six months) and adults aged ≥50 years;
- Household contacts and caregivers or people who live with a person at high-risk for complications from the flu; and
- Health care workers, including physicians, nurses, and other workers in inpatient and outpatient-care settings, medical emergency-response workers (e.g., paramedics and emergency medical technicians), employees of nursing home and long-term care facilities who have contact with patients or residents, and students in these professions who will have contact with patients.

Adequate supplies of flu vaccine are expected to be available for this year's season. Only injectable influenza vaccine formulations will be distributed in the United States. Vaccination can be given any time during the flu season.

Infection with the flu virus can cause fever, headache, cough, sore throat, runny nose, sneezing and body aches. Flu can be very contagious. For more information on influenza or the availability of flu vaccine, Kentuckians should contact their primary care medical provider or local health department. Influenza information is also available online at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>.

-30-

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.