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For Immediate Release

Influenza

Kingsford- The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department (DIDHD) is reminding local residents that flu season is likely to arrive earlier and hit harder this year than last. According to Dr. Terry Frankovich, Medical Director, "Flu season typically begins in earnest after the holidays and peaks in February, however the national Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is reporting that Influenza is already widespread in some areas of the country, so it is important to be prepared and get vaccinated now rather than waiting." In fact, Michigan is already experiencing more cases than usual for this time of year and some of these have occurred in the Upper Peninsula.

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. It can cause mild to severe illness with symptoms like fever, body aches, sore throat, congestion and cough. Every year there are thousands of deaths in the U.S. related to influenza. And, while anyone can get the flu, older people, young children, pregnant women and those with certain health conditions are at higher risk for serious flu complications. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year.

Influenza is not related to what is commonly called the "stomach flu," which usually causes vomiting and/or diarrhea and may have associated fever. Influenza vaccine does not prevent "stomach flu."

"This year's flu vaccine should be very effective, providing protection against 90% of the flu strains that are circulating," says Frankovich. "It is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older and helps to protect not only the person being vaccinated but also the community at large, including those most vulnerable."

Those who have not received this year's flu vaccine should contact their healthcare provider, health department, or local pharmacy for information or to schedule an appointment. At this time of year, some offices may be low on supply but should be able to help direct patients to facilities with vaccine in stock.

According to Dr. Frankovich, "Vaccination is the single best prevention tool to protect you, your family and the community from influenza---get vaccinated today."

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