



# MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jan. 12, 2016

## **KCHD offers general infection control guidance**

*Protect yourself and your loved ones during cold and flu season*

*Knoxville, Tenn.* – With cold and flu season upon us, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is encouraging everyone to follow some basic precautions to slow the spread of respiratory illnesses and stay healthy.

“While flu activity in Tennessee is still considered minimal, area medical providers are telling us they’re seeing an increase in non-influenza respiratory illness,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “In addition to the flu, it’s common for respiratory infections to circulate this time of year; however, regardless of the infection, some simple steps can help keep you, your family and especially the medically fragile healthy.”

### General Infection Control Guidance:

- First and foremost, it’s not too late to get a flu vaccine, which is the best way to protect yourself and those around you from the flu and its potentially serious complications. The vaccine takes about two weeks to be effective. Flu season typically peaks in January or February, which makes now an important time to get a flu vaccine if you haven’t already.
- Wash your hands well and often. Scrub your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. You can get the flu and other respiratory infections by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.
- Cover your cough or sneeze. Most respiratory illnesses, including the flu, can be spread to others up to six feet away from the infected person when they cough, sneeze or talk.
- Stay home if you’re sick and keep your children home if they are. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- If you are sick, please do not visit the elderly, children or those who have chronic health conditions.

These steps are especially important to protect those with a higher risk for complications, including children younger than 5 and especially those under 2; people age 65 and older; pregnant women; and people with certain chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

Respiratory infection symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, chills and fatigue. In addition to these, flu symptoms are usually more severe and can include body aches, vomiting and diarrhea. Typically, people with minor respiratory symptoms should stay home and avoid contact with



others. However, if symptoms do not improve in a week, if someone in a high risk group has these symptoms or if someone is highly concerned about the illness, he or she should contact a medical provider.

Those with the following emergency respiratory warning signs, should go to the emergency room:

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In addition to the signs on the left, seek medical help immediately for an infant who has any of these signs:

- Being unable to eat
- Has trouble breathing
- Has no tears when crying
- Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Flu vaccinations are available at a variety of pharmacies, doctor's offices and at all KCHD locations: the main office and clinic at 140 Dameron Ave.; the West Clinic at 1028 Old Cedar Bluff Rd.; and the Teague Clinic at 405 Dante Rd. KCHD clinics are open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Those interested in receiving a flu vaccination at KCHD should call 865-215-5070 to schedule an appointment.

#### **About Knox County Health Department:**

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD's mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit [www.knoxcounty.org/health](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health).

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