



MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jan. 5, 2018

KCHD offers infection control guidance, free flu shots

Protect yourself and your loved ones during flu season

Knoxville, Tenn. – With seasonal influenza activity high in Tennessee and especially in East Tennessee, the Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is encouraging everyone to follow some basic precautions to slow the spread of the influenza virus and stay healthy.

“Many area hospitals are reporting a sharp increase in traffic in their emergency departments due to flu, respiratory illness and other conditions,” said KCHD Director Dr. Martha Buchanan. “First and foremost, it’s important for the public to know it’s not too late to get a flu vaccine if they haven’t already this season. It’s also important that our community have information on both how to avoid infection as well as what to do if they get the flu, including when to go to the emergency room.”

KCHD is providing free flu vaccinations while supplies last at all three of its locations: the main location, 140 Dameron Ave., West Clinic, 1028 Old Cedar Bluff Rd., and Teague Clinic, 405 Dante Rd. To reduce wait time, appointments are recommended by calling 865-215-5070. Clinics are open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Free flu vaccinations only apply to the standard flu shot, not the high-dose version recommended for those over 65 years of age.

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting. Most people with the flu do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. In most cases, those with flu symptoms should stay home and avoid contact with others. However, if someone in a high-risk group has symptoms of the flu or if someone is highly concerned about the illness, he or she should first contact a medical provider or walk-in clinic and save the hospital emergency department for actual emergencies.

Young children, people aged 65 and older, pregnant women, and people with certain medical conditions, including asthma, chronic lung disease, heart disease and diabetes, are considered high risk. A comprehensive list of high-risk groups is available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s \(CDC\) website](#).

Influenza guidelines include:

- **If someone is mildly ill with flu symptoms, he or she should not go to the emergency room. Hospital emergency departments should be reserved for those who are severely ill or injured.**
- The following mild flu symptoms usually do not require treatment at an emergency room: runny nose or nasal stuffiness, low-grade fever for less than three days, mild headache, body aches, or stomach upset. Instead of visiting the emergency room, call your health care provider or seek care at a walk-in clinic.
- Limit visits to friends and relatives in the hospital. Postpone visits to the hospital to protect patients, staff and yourself from the flu. If you must visit, check with the hospital first to see if any visitor restrictions have been established.



- Stay home and away from others, especially the elderly, children or those with chronic health conditions, if you're sick. If you must leave home, to get medical care for example, wear a facemask if you have one or be sure to cover your cough and sneeze.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often to keep from spreading the flu to others. Washing your hands properly and frequently can also lower your risk of getting the flu.
- The CDC recommends those with flu symptoms stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines. Staying home includes avoiding work, school, travel, shopping, social events and public gatherings.

Those with the emergency warning signs of flu, should go to the emergency room. These signs include:

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 activity generally peaks between December and February, but the exact timing, severity and length of the flu season usually varies from one year to another. According to the CDC, all national key flu indicators are elevated and about half of the country is experiencing high flu activity, including Tennessee.

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.

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