
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flu Season is Here... Time to Vaccinate!!

GRAND RAPIDS – Last year, three children in Michigan died due to complications from influenza. It takes about two weeks for the vaccination to become effective, so this a great time to protect yourself and your family. Starting this week, you can schedule appointments through the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) for vaccinations for the 2015-2016 Flu Season. New this year: KCHD can accept Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Blue Care Network for flu vaccinations with no copay from subscribers.

The flu can have serious complications for children under the age of five, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with already-weakened immune systems. The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone over 6 months of age to protect against flu viruses. "Over the past three years, we've seen people wait until flu season is in full swing to get vaccinated," says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. "We hope this year, everyone makes a plan to get vaccinated early, before the virus starts spreading. In addition to our clinics, there are many pharmacies and health care providers offering vaccines."

KCHD's seasonal influenza program provides vaccinations for all individuals six months of age and older. The cost of the vaccine ranges from \$39-\$55. KCHD offers FluMist (nasal mist vaccine) for \$41, preservative-free options for \$40-\$44, and injectable three-strain egg-free vaccines or high-dose vaccines for \$55.

Influenza viruses infect the nose, throat, and lungs and cause respiratory illness. Flu viruses spread when people with flu cough, sneeze, or even talk. Someone might also get flu by touching a surface or object (like a phone) that has flu virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, eyes, or nose. The flu can cause mild to severe illness, and in some cases, it can be deadly. Signs and symptoms can include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (very tired), vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). Not everyone with flu will experience all of the symptoms.

Children from six months through eighteen years who have no insurance, or who have insurance that doesn't cover vaccines, will pay a sliding scale administration fee of up to \$23. The Health Department can bill Medicaid and Medicare, and we accept Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Blue Care Network. (No other private insurance is accepted at this time.) Cash, check, MasterCard, Visa, or Discover are accepted. To make an appointment at any of our four clinic locations, call (616) 632-7200. You can learn more about flu prevention at www.stickittotheflu.com.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.