

The following news advisory is being distributed by The Kent County Health Department on behalf of Spectrum Health, Metro Health – University of Michigan Health, Mercy Health and The Kent County Health Department.

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Area Hospitals and Public Health Officials Remind Community of Flu Precautions, How and When to Seek Care for Flu

SITUATION:

As the Centers for Disease Control, or CDC, reports, flu is now widespread throughout Michigan and many surrounding states. Area hospitals, urgent care facilities and doctor offices are experiencing an increase in the number of people presenting with flu and flu-like symptoms. It is important for our community to know how to prevent flu, when to seek care and where to seek care. Although the flu shot does not always prevent the flu, it can lessen the severity and duration. There is still time to get the flu shot if you have not done so already.

WHAT IS FLU:

Influenza is a respiratory illness. It is especially harmful to children, people over 65 years of age, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems or chronic conditions. Common symptoms include:

- Fever*
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

PREVENTING FLU:

Area health care providers and the CDC recommend the following to avoid flu:

- Get a flu shot.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- If you are sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever/symptoms are gone and you have stopped taking fever reducers.

- Take extra precautions to stay away from children, people over 65 years of age, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems or chronic conditions.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Throw the tissue away after it has been used and wash your hands.

WHEN TO SEEK CARE:

Most people with flu will have a mild illness and can treat symptoms by staying home and avoiding contact with others.

If you have flu-like symptoms and are in a high risk group or are very sick, contact your health care provider, such as a doctor, physician assistant or nurse.

If you are in a high risk group, contact your health care provider early in your illness.

Seek emergency medical treatment if you experience emergency warning signs, such as:

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 then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In addition to the signs above, get medical help right away for any 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

WHERE TO SEEK CARE:

Try to treat your illness at home with over-the-counter fever and pain reducers, cough medicine and other products. If you are in a high risk group or cannot control symptoms, seek non-emergency care through one of the following:

- Primary care provider office
- Urgent care

If you or a loved one experiences the emergency warning signs above, seek immediate care at a hospital emergency room.

EMERGENCY SERVICES: If you are experiencing shortness of breath, numbness, facial or arm paralysis, slurred speech or other heart attack or stroke symptoms, call 9-1-1 for immediate medical care.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Use the contact information above or go to <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

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