



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Over 800 Confirmed Cases of Flu in Kent County

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) has received 813 reports of influenza confirmed by rapid tests by health care providers this flu season. Nearly 17% of people visiting emergency departments in Kent County last week were suffering from influenza-like illness. This is the highest percentage tracked by KCHD since the H1N1 Influenza season in 2009. From September 1, 2014, through December 22, the number of confirmed cases of flu reported to KCHD was 415.

Flu viruses spread when people with flu cough, sneeze, or even talk. "The virus can live on some surfaces for up to 48 hours," says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. "If you are sick, stay home until you recover, and limit contact with people who are not sick. The absolute, best protection from the flu is vaccination." There is no cure for the flu, but there are anti-viral medications which can help people recover faster if they are taken within the first 24-48 hours of getting sick.

The flu can have serious complications for children under the age of five, the elderly, and people with already-weakened immune systems. 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)

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone over 6 months of age to protect against flu viruses. The Kent County Health Department seasonal influenza program provides vaccinations for all individuals six months of age and older. The cost of the vaccine ranges from \$39-\$55; FluMist nasal spray (a live, preservative-free, four strain vaccine) is available for \$41.

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 only bill Medicaid and Medicare; private insurance is not accepted. 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 also schedule online at www.stickttotheflu.com. Most primary care providers and many local pharmacies also provide influenza vaccinations and can bill private insurance.

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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.