



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Flu is Widespread Late in Season

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BURLINGTON - Better late than never is a catchphrase that does not apply to influenza.

The Vermont Department of Health is reporting widespread flu activity late in the flu season, including confirmed cases and outbreaks in long-term care facilities in Addison, Bennington, Caledonia, Lamoille, Rutland, Windsor and Chittenden Counties.

“Flu is unpredictable and while this is unusual and the season has been relatively mild so far, we are not the only state that is seeing an upswing in flu cases,” said Deputy State Epidemiologist Susan Schoenfeld. “During previous late seasons, activity has continued into May.”

The Health Department issued a health advisory on Wednesday advising health care providers to give antiviral treatment to long-term care residents who have confirmed or suspected influenza.

Older people, young children, pregnant women, and anyone with serious chronic illness such as heart disease are particularly vulnerable to serious complications from the flu.

“Newly admitted residents, health care workers and visitors can introduce flu into a long-term care facility.” Schoenfeld said, “Caring may mean not visiting. If you are ill, stay home. Flu is highly contagious.”

Getting vaccinated is always the best protection against the flu. Vaccine may still be available at health care provider offices. Take the following simple precautions to help keep illness from spreading:

- Cover your mouth and nose every time you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw it away.
- Wash your hands often, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Use alcohol-based hand wipes and gel sanitizers if soap and water are not available.
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick.

The Health Department Laboratory has identified a mix of influenza A/H3, 2009 A/H1, and influenza B from specimens submitted during this flu season.

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