

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 1/3/2017

TO: Grant County healthcare providers, infection control staff, supervisory nursing staff, clinic management, school nurses.
Grant County Emergency Management
Grant County Media

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

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Influenza Season Arrives in Grant County.

GCHD has received reports of positive rapid tests for influenza A within the last 7 days.

The Grant County Health Officer, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, has issued the following alert to the Grant County healthcare community and media: The influenza season has arrived in Grant County. Be aware of increasing influenza activity in Grant County and Washington State; as well as influenza in residents of long term care facilities (LTCF) with acute illness. All healthcare facilities should enforce their policies regarding healthcare worker's influenza vaccinations and masking.

A Long Term Care Facility (LTCF) is seeing increased number of cases.

There is a flu outbreak in one LTCF and the facility is working with GCHD to control the spread of the illness.

The holiday season brought us together with friends and family to share memories and good times not to share germs and illnesses like the flu. GCHD urges all residents **6 months and older to get their flu shot as soon as possible.** Flu activity typically increases in the winter months when people spend more time indoors around each other. People who haven't been vaccinated against the flu still have time to get the vaccine before the season reaches its peak.

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu shot this season.

- Only injectable flu vaccines (flu shot) are recommended this season.
- The nasal spray (FluMist®) flu vaccine is not recommended this season.
- Flu shots do work. CDC found that flu shots reduced a child's risk of ending up at the doctor's office sick with flu by more than 60% last season.

Children 6 months through 8 years of age need either 1 or 2 doses of vaccine.

- Children 6 months through 8 years getting vaccinated for the first time, or who have only previously received 1 dose of vaccine in the past, should get 2 doses this season.
 - The first dose should be given as soon as vaccine is available to "prime" the immune system.
 - The second dose should be given at least 28 days later to build more and longer lasting immune protection.
 - Children who only get 1 dose, but need 2 doses, are likely to have less or possibly no protection from that single dose.

Why is FluMist® not recommended this season?

Studies conducted by the CDC; soon after the nasal spray flu vaccine was approved showed it was performing as well as (and sometimes better than) flu shots. Unfortunately, there have been recent problems with how well the nasal spray flu vaccine has worked. No one knows why this happened. Many people are trying to learn why, so that nasal spray flu vaccine may in the future again be an option for kids and parents.

Spreading the Flu

People with the flu can make others sick one day before symptoms appear and up to five days after symptoms begin. Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and throw it away. It is very important to wash your hands often. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers work well when soap and warm water are not available.

If you or a family member are sick with a flu-like sickness, stay home from school or work for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine), unless you need to leave to receive medical care. If your doctor prescribes antiviral medicine, finish the entire prescription.

Are you at increased risk?

Flu can make existing health conditions worse and can lead to hospitalization and death.

- People with asthma, diabetes, chronic lung disease, heart disease, and people over 65 years old are among those who are at a higher risk for developing flu-related complications.
- Infants are at an increased risk for flu, caregivers who are sick should wear a mask when caring for an infant.
- Pregnant women are at serious risk of flu complications. The flu shot is safe and recommended at any stage of pregnancy. When expectant moms get a flu shot it protects the baby inside too — for up to six months after birth. Get a flu shot to protect you and your growing family.

There are flu vaccines available in various locations, including health care provider offices and pharmacies. People can also find a clinic by calling the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or GCHD at 509-766-7960.

Influenza resources for LTCFs

[Recommendations for Prevention & Control of Influenza Outbreaks in Long Term Care Facilities](#) | WA-DOH

[CDC interim guidance for influenza outbreak management in LTCFs](#) | CDC

Consultation

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