

NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: Karrey Britt
Communications Coordinator
Office: (785) 856-7362

Health Department urges flu vaccination along with Lawrence family who lost loved one due to flu complications

(Lawrence, KS) – The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older should get a yearly flu vaccine. Getting the vaccination is the most effective way to avoid getting the flu, a contagious respiratory illness.

Influenza can cause mild to severe symptoms and can lead to death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 200,000 people are hospitalized each year from flu complications and there are thousands of deaths. Those most at-risk are infants and young children, older adults and pregnant women; however, flu is unpredictable and even healthy children and adults can get flu.

Lawrence resident Rachael Marie Sheridan died Feb. 24, 2014, due to complications from flu at age 39. Sheridan's family said she typically got a flu vaccine, but last year was an exception. "We just really, truly never thought we would lose her to the flu. Not for a second, did I think a healthy 39-year-old woman would die from flu," said her sister Elisabeth Sheridan, of Lawrence. "We are big proponents of flu vaccination, especially after seeing firsthand the toll it took not only on my sister, but others who were hospitalized with flu at the same time my sister was in the hospital."

Health Department Clinic Supervisor Kathy Colson said it's important to get vaccinated as soon as possible, ideally by October, because it takes two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against the flu virus. While seasonal flu outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time flu activity peaks in January or later.

The Health Department, 200 Maine St., offers flu shots on a walk-in basis during clinic hours. No appointment is necessary. The flu shot is \$25 for children ages 6 months to 35 months and \$30 for those 3 years and older. The Health Department accepts private insurance, Medicare Part B, Medicaid and KanCare insurance plans.

Good health habits are also an important way to prevent the flu:

- **Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

- **Stay home when you are sick.** Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- **Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- **Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **Practice other good health habits.** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

About the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 120 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

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