

NEWS RELEASE
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Health Department recommends vaccination to prevent flu

(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. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu causes hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands of deaths every season. 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.

Clinic Supervisor Kathy Colson said it's not only important to get vaccinated to protect yourself, but also your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors. "People can be infected with the flu virus and not be showing symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others."

The CDC recommends getting 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.

"Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctor's visits and missed work and school due to flu," Colson said. "It's the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses."

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:

- \$28 for children ages 6 months to 35 months.
- \$20 for children ages 6 months to 18 years, who qualify for the Vaccines for Children program. To qualify, children must meet one of the following criteria: Medicaid eligible, uninsured, American Indian or Alaska native or underinsured.
- \$35 for individuals 3 years and older.
- \$51 for the high-dose vaccine for individuals who are 65 and older.

The Health Department accepts private insurance, Medicare Part B, Medicaid and KanCare insurance plans.

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

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home from work, school and errands when you are sick. The CDC recommends you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- 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 spread this way.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.
- Practice good health habits. 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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