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Contact: Tom Schlueter (630) 444-3098

(630) 417-9729 cell

### **Get A Flu Shot During Vaccinate Illinois Week, December 8-14**

While flu activity is currently low in Illinois, public health officials expect activity to increase over the coming weeks. To reduce the risk of illness, public health departments and healthcare organizations across the state, including the Kane County Health Department, are encouraging residents to get a flu shot during Vaccinate Illinois Week, December 8 through the 14. Vaccinate Illinois Week is a statewide observance focused on educating the public about the importance of flu vaccine during the fall and winter months.

“It’s not too late to get a flu shot,” said Barbara Jeffers, Executive Director of the Kane County Health Department. “In fact, Vaccinate Illinois Week is an ideal time to get vaccinated since influenza activity often peaks in January, and it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against infection.”

Public health officials recommend that everyone six months of age and older should be vaccinated against influenza, especially pregnant women, young children, people 65 years of age and older, and anyone with underlying health conditions like asthma, diabetes, or a weakened immune system. A flu vaccine is needed every year because flu viruses are constantly changing.

People with flu can spread it to others up to about 6 feet away. Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Less often, a person might also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

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Although getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent getting influenza, you can also reduce your risk by:

- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Practicing good cough etiquette, such as coughing into your elbow instead of your hands.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- Avoiding close contact with sick people.

If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.

Certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu. This includes older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and persons who live in facilities like nursing homes. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Complications of the flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes. Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Over a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2006, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000.

For more information on the flu, please visit our website at <http://www.kanehealth.com/flu.htm>.

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