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It's Not Too Late to Get the Flu Vaccination *PSHD Encourages Residents to Get Vaccinated*

Influenza, commonly called the flu, is one of the most common infections of the respiratory system. It infects the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has seen a rapid increase of influenza cases in Connecticut over the past couple of weeks and has contributed to the deaths of three individuals in Connecticut over the age of 65. The Plainville Southington Health District (PSHD) encourages residents to get vaccinated for the flu and to take other steps to prevent influenza-related illness and hospitalization.

“We usually see the number of cases of flu peak between late December and early March, making now a great time to get vaccinated,” said Shane Lockwood, PSHD Director of Health.

“We encourage residents to get vaccinated to ensure protection against the flu.”

“While we don’t yet know how effective this year’s vaccine will be, we do know that the flu shot will give people more protection against the flu, and at the very least will lessen the symptoms if flu is contracted, than not having the shot at all,” said Dr. Raul Pino, DPH Commissioner.

Flu symptoms have a sudden and abrupt onset and may last 1-2 weeks. Symptoms include fever, headache, chills, extreme tiredness, and muscle and body aches. Fluids and rest are the best way to treat influenza. The flu is spread through person-to-person contact and through coughing or sneezing. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications, like pneumonia and bronchitis, which can lead to hospitalization or even death.

Some ways to prevent or control flu symptoms include:

- Get an annual flu shot.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap; particularly after sneezing or blowing your nose.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing (use a tissue and discard immediately).
- Avoid close contact with a person who has the flu, especially during the first few days. Stay home when ill, so as not to spread the flu.
- Put a second hand towel out for guests and healthy family members to use.
- Drink plenty of fluids – 8 glasses of water or juice/day. Adequate fluid intake helps keep the lining of the nose and throat moist so that mucus is easier to clear.
- Avoid drinks containing alcohol or caffeine – these tend to lead to dehydration.

- Keep your immune system healthy and strong – get plenty of rest, eat well, take your vitamins, and exercise.
- Gargle with salt water to help relieve inflammation and pain of a sore throat.
- Stay at home, so as not to spread the flu.

As of December 16, 2017, 355 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza have been reported in Connecticut, an increase of 100 cases over the previous week. 144 Connecticut patients have been hospitalized with confirmed cases of influenza, including 46 new hospitalizations between December 9th and December 16th. Overall, the most prevalent strain of influenza seen in Connecticut thus far this season is Influenza A (H3N2), which typically causes more severe illness than other flu strains.

For more information on influenza visit the Connecticut Department of Public Health website at www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3115&q=500340 or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov.

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The mission of the Plainville Southington Health District is to preserve, protect, promote, and improve the quality of life in a healthy environment through the prevention of disease, ongoing health education opportunities and the enhancement of the well-being of its residents.