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Milwaukee Area Sees Decrease in Flu-Related Emergency Department Visits
City of Milwaukee Health Department continues to monitor seasonal flu activity and urges residents to help prevent the spread of flu

MILWAUKEE – Although seasonal influenza remains widespread across the country, including in Wisconsin, the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) has recorded a decrease hospital emergency department (ED) visits for influenza-like illness over the past week.

“In the midst of a fairly severe flu season, we are happy to see a decrease in the number of Milwaukee residents reporting to area emergency departments with severe flu-like symptoms,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker.

At this time, a total of 280 hospitalizations within the city have been reported to the MHD compared to 93 one year ago. Hospitalizations remain highest for individuals ages 65 and above and younger than 1 year of age. Each year, approximately 200,000 hospitalizations related to flu-like illness are reported nationwide. While ED visits are declining locally, there may be a rise in reported hospitalizations during the coming weeks due to a lag in reporting from facilities.

The MHD urges area residents to help prevent the spread of the flu as the season progresses.

The flu vaccine remains the best way to protect your health, and it is not too late to get vaccinated. The vaccine is recommended for all individuals over 6 months of age, especially those at greatest risk for serious complications, including adults 65 and older, children younger than 5, and pregnant women. A survey of local pharmacies and health care providers indicates that vaccine and antiviral medications remain available in the area. The MHD recommends that individuals first contact their health care provider, then contact area retail pharmacies and clinics to find available vaccine and medication.

Practicing healthy behaviors is also key to staying well this season. The MHD asks city residents to help reduce the spread of flu by washing your hands often with soap and water, and covering your nose and mouth with your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.

If you experience flu-like symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, body aches, and fatigue, stay home from work or school, get rest, and drink plenty of fluids. Contact your health care provider if symptoms are severe and/or worsen after six to seven days.

Further information can be found at www.milwaukee.gov/health.

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