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Influenza activity increasing in suburban Cook County

Cook County Department of Public Health officials encourage residents to get a flu vaccine and stay home when ill.

Currently, suburban Cook County is experiencing an increase in influenza like illness with 44 confirmed influenza ICU admissions and 6 influenza related deaths. Cook County Department of Public Health's Chief Operating Officer Dr. Terry Mason is encouraging everyone six months of age and older to get a flu shot.

"Of the 44 ICU admissions the ages range from toddler to late 90's," Dr. Mason said. "That demonstrates that anyone can get the flu and since the activity hasn't even peaked yet, we expect more ICU admissions and potentially deaths in the coming weeks. It's extremely important to get your flu shot now; it's the best defense against the flu virus."

Flu vaccine is readily available at your local pharmacy, family doctor and some grocery stores throughout suburban Cook County.

Influenza is a health concern for people of all ages including young children and pregnant women. However, individuals with a weakened immune system and people aged 65 years and older are at a higher risk for complications from the flu.

Influenza is a virus that affects the respiratory system and is spread primarily when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms of influenza can range from mild to life-threatening and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and fatigue.

To limit the spread of flu, residents should practice common sense and 3 C's:

- Clean – properly wash your hands frequently
- Cover – cover your cough and sneeze
- Contain – contain your germs by staying home if you are sick

For more information about our current influenza surveillance, or to use the Flu Vaccine Finder, visit our website at <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org>.

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