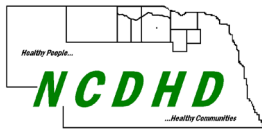


News Release



North Central District Health Department (NCDHD) represents the following counties;
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Protect Yourself - Get Your Flu Vaccine

Flu season usually takes place from November through March, and this year will be no exception. The flu activity is widespread in Nebraska and the only way to really protect yourself is by getting a flu shot. Getting immunized in December can still protect you against the flu.

Dr. Richard Raymond, Chief Medical Officer for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services System, said "It's true that sometimes people who get a flu shot will still get the flu, but they will not be as sick as they would have been without a flu shot. They may also mistake other viruses for the flu – viruses that are not as severe."

The most common symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever, usually 102 degrees Fahrenheit, but can go up to 104 degrees Fahrenheit and usually lasts three to four days.
- Headache, often severe with sudden onset.
- Sore throat.
- Muscle aches, often severe.
- Coughing, which can become severe.
- Tiredness and weakness, which can last two or more weeks.
- Sneezing.
- Runny nose.

To stay healthy and in stopping the spread of germs:

- Clean your hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.
- Get vaccinations for flu and pneumonia as recommended for your age and health conditions. Vaccines for these diseases can prevent some serious respiratory illnesses.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze. Throw the used tissue in a wastebasket.
- If you do not have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve, not into your hands.
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose, always clean your hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.

- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu is a highly infectious disease that affects the nose, throat and lungs and can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 114,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 36,000 die because of the flu. Most who die are 65 years and older, but influenza and its complications are the 6th leading cause of death among children 4 years old and younger.

North Central District Health Department urges you to talk with your family physician about what you can do in getting vaccinations for flu and pneumonia as recommended for your age and health conditions.