



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The Health Department's Top Gift Tip This Season – Get a Flu Shot!

PITTSBURGH – With the holidays in full swing and reported flu cases on the rise, the Allegheny County Health Department urges County residents to protect themselves from the viruses circulating this season.

“We’ve had a surge of more than 600 reported cases in the last two weeks and approximately 200 people have been hospitalized since the beginning of the flu season,” said County Health Department Director Dr. Karen Hacker. “The first line of defense against the flu is still vaccination, which creates antibodies to help fight this infectious disease.”

While this year’s flu vaccine is acknowledged not to be a perfect match for one of the Type A viruses circulating, it does offer protection against three other circulating virus strains. After vaccination, it takes approximately two weeks to receive protection from the flu virus.

Everyone six months of age and older should be vaccinated against the flu. Vaccination can reduce the severity of illness, related health care visits, missed work or school, hospitalizations and deaths.

In addition to getting vaccinated, the Health Department offers these tips to stay healthy this holiday season:

- Use personal etiquette. Cover your nose and mouth with your inner sleeve or a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your child has a flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to get medical care or other necessities.
- While caring for someone who is sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.

If you do develop symptoms of flu, contact your health care provider, since antiviral medications taken early in the course of illness can reduce the severity of disease.

For more information, contact the Allegheny County Health Department at **412-687-ACHD (2243)** or visit www.achd.net.

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