

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Influenza levels are increasing in Washtenaw County. There have already been 21 Washtenaw adults hospitalized with flu this season.
- Last year's flu season was moderately severe, resulting in 116 hospitalizations and 4 deaths in Washtenaw County. The deaths were in adults  $\geq 70$  years who had high-risk underlying health conditions. The hospitalizations were fairly evenly distributed among younger, middle-aged and older adults, but with few hospitalizations seen in children 17 years and younger. Almost all hospitalized individuals had an underlying high-risk condition. Residents of the Ypsilanti area and African-American adults had higher rates of hospitalization than expected.
- **Seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended every year for every person age six months and older.**

## Influenza (the flu)

Influenza (or flu) is a highly contagious respiratory virus that can be spread person to person through droplets when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks. The flu can affect anyone, and for many healthy adults, it is not serious. However, senior citizens, children and individuals with chronic health conditions may become more seriously ill as a result of the flu. Several different strains of flu viruses circulate each year, making seasonal vaccination necessary.

Flu symptoms include:

- Cough
- Runny or stuff nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Fever and/or chills
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea (common in children)

Washtenaw County flu activity is monitored closely and typically peaks during the winter months (January or February). Flu seasons can be unpredictable – especially in term of severity. We do know that each year, seasonal flu will arrive locally. Also, we know that vaccination can provide protection against severe illness and can reduce the spread of illness in our community. For these reasons, seasonal flu vaccination is recommended every year for everyone six months and older.

In addition to annual flu vaccination, take these steps to stay healthy and to prevent the spread of disease:

- Stay home if you are sick
- Cover your nose when you sneeze or cough
- Wash hands often using soap and water
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs

Local clinicians have been doing a great job vaccinating kids. Among Washtenaw children ages 6 months through 4 years, 70% received at least one dose of flu vaccine last year. Not only is this the top rate in Michigan for this age group, it is also reflected in our low hospitalization rates. Flu hospitalization rates for children (< 17 years) have steadily declined over the past several years, representing only 5% of hospitalizations this past flu season as compared to 22% in the 2010-2011 season.

Unfortunately, vaccination rates drop off among those 18 - 24 years, which is an area of concern. Only 12% of County residents in this age group were vaccinated against seasonal flu last year.

### What is WCPH doing to address this issue?

- Staff monitor local flu activity and communicate testing and treatment recommendations to local health care providers. Updated flu activity numbers are provided here: [www.ewashtenaw.org/flu](http://www.ewashtenaw.org/flu)
- Public Health offers vaccines to children and adults regardless of income or insurance status. Residents are encouraged to call 734-544-6700 to schedule an appointment. Cost for the flu shot is \$25. Cost for the Flu Mist varies by age: 2 - 18 years is \$31, and 19 - 49 years \$36. All flu vaccine offered at WCPH is quadrivalent and includes four influenza strains (influenza A/H1N1, A/H3N2, and 2 influenza B strains).
- Public Health offered five flu vaccine clinics to Washtenaw County employees in the fall of 2014, with 318 employees vaccinated.

### For more information:

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