



**DATE:** December 28, 2017

**TO:** DeKalb County News Media

**FROM:** Lisa Gonzalez  
Public Health Administrator

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Flu Shot: An Important Step to Help Protect Against the Flu***

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a new estimate that each year, between 291,000 and 646,000 people die worldwide from seasonal influenza related complications. During the week of December 3-9, influenza activity increased in the United States, according to the CDC's weekly U.S. Influenza Flu View Report.

To reduce the risk of illness, the DeKalb County Health Department (DCHD) strongly encourages residents to get their flu shots, especially those at higher risk of flu including pregnant women, children younger than 5 years, and people 65 years of age and older.

"It's especially important for children younger than 5 years old, but older than 6 months, to get a flu shot every season," says Lorna Schmidt, Communicable Disease Coordinator at the DeKalb County Health Department. "This is because the flu is more dangerous than the common cold, especially for children younger than 5 years, which is why we want to get the word out to parents and family members about the importance of children getting their vaccination."

Each year, the CDC scientifically predicts the strains most likely to be seen in the upcoming flu season. However, there are instances that other influenza strains appear within a season, still allowing a person to get sick. It is important to understand that while this may happen, if they have received their flu shot they will most likely develop a less severe influenza illness.

Getting your vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu, however, you can also reduce your risk by practicing the three C's:

- **Clean:** Wash your hands often, with soap and water, clean and disinfect surfaces.
- **Cover:** Cough into your elbow instead of your hands.
- **Contain:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.

Although it's best to receive a flu vaccination before flu spreads in the community, it's not too late to get your flu shot as peak season for the flu is commonly in January or February. DCHD has offered walk-in flu clinics for adults and children since September and will continue clinic

hours. Walk-in hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00am – 12:00pm and 1:00pm – 4:00 pm. DCHD accepts Medicare, Medicaid, and most PPO health insurances. If you are interested in getting your flu shot at the DCHD, please bring all insurance cards, a credit card, and photo id with you when coming for your flu shot. Medicaid will be billed or payment of \$15 will be accepted for those children who qualify for the Vaccine for Children (VFC) program. For current updates, call the Flu Hotline at 815-748-2410 (English) or 815-748-2425 (Spanish).

To learn more about flu vaccinations, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu> or [www.cdc.gov/fightflu](http://www.cdc.gov/fightflu)  
For more information about the DeKalb County Health Department Services, visit [health.dekalbcounty.org](http://health.dekalbcounty.org) or follow us on social media.

