FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JoJohnson County health official says a flu shot is still your best defense against influenza viruses

JOHNSON COUNTY, KAN. (Dec. 6, 2017) – The director of the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) says a flu shot is still your best defense against the various influenza viruses circulating in the community.

JCDHE Director Lougene Marsh says flu vaccination protects against three or four different flu viruses (depending on which vaccine you get) and provides protection throughout the flu season. “While flu vaccine can vary in how well it works from year to year, it still prevents millions of illnesses and tens of thousands of flu-related hospitalizations each year.”

Marsh says that even when the viruses in the vaccine are not closely matched with what’s circulating in the community, the flu shot can prevent flu-related complications and make your illness milder because antibodies made in response to the vaccine can provide some protection against different, but related influenza viruses.

Flu activity usually peaks between December and February, though activity can last as late as May, so even those who’ve already had the flu this season can still benefit from getting the flu shot, Marsh adds. “Since it takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop and provide protection against the flu, now is a great time get vaccinated so you and your loved ones are protected during the upcoming holidays.”

Marsh says flu cases in Johnson County, Kan. are typical for this time of year. As of Dec. 1, 90 cases have been voluntarily reported to JCDHE by local healthcare providers. The highest number of cases are in adults over age 65 and people age 5 to 24 years old. Nearly 70 percent of the current flu viruses being reported are type A.

The Centers for Disease Control and Preventions says everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine, especially those who are at a greater risk for serious flu illness: adults over age 65, babies and children younger than 5, pregnant women and people with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease.

(more)
In addition to getting a flu shot, Marsh says there are everyday preventative actions people can take to protect themselves and their loved ones from the flu:

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or other necessities.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment offers flu shots at its walk-in health clinics in Olathe (11875 S. Sunset Drive) and Mission (6000 Lamar Ave.). No appointment is needed and the shot is covered by most health insurance plans. Those without health insurance can get a flu shot for $30.

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About Johnson County, Kansas
Located in the southwestern quadrant of the Kansas City Metropolitan Region, Johnson County, Kansas is a community of choice with a current population of more than 580,000, making it the most populated of the 105 counties in Kansas, but traditionally having the lowest mill levy in the state. For more information visit the county’s website at [www.jocogov.org](http://www.jocogov.org).