



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

John T. Jansen, Director
Department of Human Services

Jen Freiheit, Interim Director, Health Officer
Division of Health Services
Job Center / Human Services Building
8600 Sheridan Road, Suite 600
Kenosha, WI 53143-6515
Phone: (262) 605-6700
Fax: (262) 605-6715

January 3, 2020

News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jen Freiheit
Telephone: 262-605-6700
E-mail: Jen.Freiheit@kenoshacounty.org

Kenosha County, state health officials urge residents to take precautions as flu season takes hold

KENOSHA – With influenza-related hospitalizations on the rise statewide, local and state health officials are emphasizing steps people can take to avoid illness.

To date this winter season, Kenosha County has had seven confirmed cases of influenza, with five hospitalizations, said Jen Freiheit, interim director of the Kenosha County Division of Health. Meantime, the county has also had 11 confirmed cases of pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough.

Statewide, there have been 459 flu-related hospitalizations – more than three times as many than at this time last year – and 11 deaths due to complications from influenza, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services reports.

While Kenosha County has not seen a spike in influenza cases like that experienced statewide, Freiheit cautioned that could change at any time.

“There are some simple things people can do to minimize their susceptibility to influenza and pertussis,” Freiheit said. “This includes washing your hands often with soap and water, scrubbing for 20 seconds at a time, and cleaning household surfaces like doorknobs.”

Receiving the flu vaccine, if you haven’t already this season, can also help prevent the virus and greatly reduce symptoms, the state Department of Health Services noted.

Other everyday habits that can help prevent spread of the flu include:

- Stay home if you’re sick. You can pass the flu to friends or family before you even know you have it.
- If you’re visiting a loved one in a hospital, nursing home or other assisted living facility, ask a nurse for a mask and be sure to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. Some facilities may put restrictions on visitors. Check before you go.

- Don't hold or kiss a baby if you're sick. Babies under six months old cannot get the flu shot.
- Cover your sneeze or cough with your upper sleeve and try to avoid touching your face with your hand. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use.
- Use your own drinking cups, straws and utensils.
- Eat nutritious meals, get plenty of rest, and don't smoke.

Freiheit said people should visit their primary care physician if they suspect either influenza or pertussis. While both influenza and pertussis can start out with symptoms like a cold with runny nose and cough, pertussis can develop further into violent fits of coughing or even vomiting, Freiheit said.

“Our Kenosha County Division of Health nurses are busy conducting communicable disease investigations and follow-up as required by Wisconsin State Statute to prevent, minimize, and control the spread of diseases such as influenza and pertussis,” Freiheit said.

###