FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KILL DATE: (January 24, 2014)

Influenza Continues to Cause Severe Illness in Livingston County

Public Health Stresses Importance of Vaccination

HOWELL, Michigan. - (January 17, 2014) The Livingston County Department of Public Health (LCDPH) is continuing to see an increase in flu cases, many of which are requiring hospitalization. As of January 16, 2014, the estimated flu activity in Michigan has been upgraded from ‘regional’ activity to the highest level of ‘widespread’ activity, reflecting increases in laboratory-confirmed and hospitalized influenza cases from all regions of the state. The majority of cases continue to be 2009 H1N1 influenza and younger age groups continue to be disproportionally affected. As of January 17th, there have been 105 lab-confirmed cases in Livingston County this flu season, ranging in age from 1 – 88 years with an average age of 42 years. All lab-confirmed cases have tested positive for influenza A, including H1N1, the deadly influenza strain behind the 2009 pandemic. There have been 27 influenza-related hospitalizations (25.7% of cases), ranging in age from 23-88 years with an average age of 60 years.

The LCDPH is strongly encouraging everyone over the age of six months to seek seasonal flu vaccination if they have not already. Vaccine is readily available through health care providers, pharmacies, and the LCDPH.

Influenza, or flu, is a very contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Symptoms often include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. Younger children may also experience vomiting or diarrhea, but these symptoms are not typical of adults with influenza. Annual vaccination offers the best protection against flu. If diagnosed within 48 hours of onset, antiviral medication can decrease the symptoms and length of illness and may prevent serious complications or hospitalization.

Although annual flu vaccination offers the best protection, basic prevention strategies can also reduce the spread of illness.

- Wash hands frequently, especially after coughing, sneezing, and handling used tissues.
• Avoid close contact with those who have colds or flu-like symptoms. Stay away from others if you are sick.
• After contact with a person who is ill, wash your hands and keep your fingers away from your eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent the spread of the virus.
• Boost your immune system by eating a healthy diet and getting regular physical activity and plenty of rest.

The LCDPH monitors communicable diseases, such as influenza, in Livingston County. For more information please visit www.lchd.org or call (517) 546-9850.

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