

Public Health Points

York City Bureau of Health

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Flu Season Underway In York

As in many years past, the first cases of influenza (flu) in York usually appear between the holidays Thanksgiving and Christmas. So it was no surprise that during the week of December 8 – 14 the first cases of laboratory-confirmed flu in York City residents, four of them, were reported to the York City Bureau of Health. Furthermore, flu cases have been reported elsewhere in the state and the nation for a number of weeks beforehand. Conclusion so far – We're off to a fairly typical start to this 2013-2014 flu season.

Many persons who get flu symptoms during the winter months will self-treat with rest, fluids, and over-the-counter medications that relieve their most prominent symptoms. Some will seek medical care, perhaps they will be tested for flu and perhaps they will receive a prescription for an anti-viral medication. Since only persons with a positive laboratory test for flu are officially counted as flu cases, it is obvious that the total number of flu cases is significantly undercounted.

The best way to avoid getting the flu is to get a flu vaccination. Flu vaccine supply is more than adequate to meet the demand. Persons wanting the vaccine have numerous places in the community to go to get their flu vaccination – medical care provider offices, pharmacies, public health clinics, and even some job worksites, to mention a few.

Flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Groups at increased risk for complications of the flu include: adults 50 years of age and older, children 6 months to 4 years of age, residents of long-term care facilities, persons under 18 years of age receiving chronic aspirin therapy (usually for juvenile rheumatoid arthritis), and pregnant women. It is especially important for pregnant women to get the flu vaccine to help prevent severe illness and pregnancy-related complications that can result from flu. Another high priority group to get the flu vaccine each year is healthcare workers.

In addition, persons with certain medical conditions are particularly at high risk from complications of the flu and should get an annual flu vaccination. Those individuals include persons with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, weakened immune systems, diabetes, liver disease, kidney disease, neurologic or neuromuscular disease, and morbid obesity (BMI \geq 40).

Persons who are interested in tracking this year's flu season can get up-to-date data and information on several reliable websites. Pennsylvania data is available on www.health.state.pa.us/flu. National data can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu

Reportable Conditions – 2013 City of York, Pa		
Reported Cases	Nov.	Total
Animal Bites	6	97
Campylobacter Enteritis	2	5
Chlamydia	24	488
Cryptosporidiosis	0	2
Foodborne Outbreak	0	1
Gonorrhea	11	213
Hepatitis A	0	1
Hepatitis B	0	3
Hepatitis C	2	78
Histoplasmosis	0	1
HIV Infection	1	20
Influenza, Type A	0	33
Influenza, Type B	0	17
Influenza, Not Specified	0	1
Invasive Group A Beta-Strep Disease	0	2
Lead Poisoning	0	16
Lyme Disease	1	7
Meningitis – Aseptic	1	2
Meningitis – Bacterial	0	1
Meningitis – Fungal	0	1
Rabies (Animal)	0	1
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infection	2	44
Salmonellosis	2	5
Total Case Reports	52	1039

Best wishes for a Safe and Healthy New Year!

~ The Health Bureau Staff

7 Tips to Get Enrolled in Marketplace Insurance (from www.webmd.com/health-insurance)

- 1. Reset your application.** You can erase old applications. You might especially want to do this if you visited the site in October or early November when it was having a huge number of problems.
- 2. Create a new account.** If you had other technical problems while using Healthcare.gov, you may have to create a new account and username. Healthcare.gov offers a few tips.
- 3. Window shop for plans and doctors.** A new feature gives people more leeway to “window shop” for various types of plans without needing to apply. You’ll only need to provide a few basic facts about yourself, such as where you live. Click on “see plans” on Healthcare.gov to start shopping around. This feature will allow you to review the plans and see if they cover your doctors and medical networks.
- 4. Know what counts as income.** It’s crucial to remember that the system is not asking for your total income, even though it often uses the general term “income.” Healthcare.gov cares about your modified adjusted gross income. The system uses that income to figure out if you’re eligible for a tax-credit subsidy that would lower your insurance cost, or to find out if you’re eligible for Medicaid, the federal insurance program for the poor. In most cases, your modified adjusted gross income will be the same as your adjusted gross income, which is found on your IRS tax return.
- 5. Talk to a person.** You can get guidance from local “navigators” and other assisters whose job is to help people figure out their health insurance options. Their services are free. Visit localhelp.healthcare.gov to find out how to reach an assister in your area. You can also call the Healthcare.gov Customer Call Center 24 hours a day at 800-318-2596.
- 6. Protect against fraud.** Remember that you can use Healthcare.gov to explore various options without providing your name or address. Don’t pay anyone for assistance, and ask for proof of certification if you use an in-person assister. Don’t respond to unsolicited calls. Be skeptical of high-pressure tactics.
- 7. Call the insurance company to check if you’re insured.** You’ll need to contact your insurance company directly for confirmation that you’re enrolled and that your premium has been paid. You’ll pay your insurer directly. If you have any problems, call the Healthcare.gov Customer Call Center at 800-318-2596.

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