



DOUGLAS COUNTY
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FLU ACTIVITY UPDATE

According to surveillance data, flu activity continues to increase in Oregon. Two reported outbreaks of respiratory illness in local middle schools were investigated by Douglas County Public Health and confirmed as Influenza B outbreaks. These two middle schools reported absenteeism rates due to illness as high as 35%.

There are two main types of flu viruses: Types A and B. Influenza A and B viruses are responsible for seasonal flu epidemics each year. Influenza B generally causes milder disease than type A and primarily affects children. Adults can transmit influenza from the day before symptom onset to approximately 5 days after symptoms begin; however, children can transmit influenza to others for 10 or more days.

The most effective method of preventing influenza in the community is by vaccinating more people each year. Vaccine may be given up to and even after influenza activity is documented in a region. Although most influenza vaccination activities should be completed by December (particularly for high-risk groups), providers should continue to provide vaccine throughout flu season and the spring.

People who should get vaccinated each year are:

1. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
2. Pregnant women
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

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6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
- Health care workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

Twenty-five influenza A viruses and 15 influenza B viruses were identified in Oregon by culture or PCR for the week of February 22nd -28th. As of today, a total of 144 influenza A and 55 influenza B viruses have been identified in Oregon for the 2008-09 influenza season by these methods. While incidence for all influenza types increased last week over previous weeks, influenza B viruses accounted for nearly 40% of the circulating viruses detected in Oregon during the week of February 22-28th. The percentage of influenza viruses that are being identified as influenza B has steadily increased over the past few weeks.

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