

January 4, 2017

Upswing in local influenza activity

Actions Requested

- **Be aware that influenza activity is on the rise in our community.** In fact, both Kitsap County and statewide surveillance data show increases in laboratory positive tests, influenza-like-illness visits, and other measures.
- **Offer influenza vaccine to your patients, especially those who are at high risk.** Annual influenza vaccine is recommended for all people ages six months and older who do not have contraindications.
- **Review the categories considered to be high risk for influenza complications:**
 - Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
 - Adults 65 years of age and older
 - Pregnant women and women up to two weeks post-partum
 - Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
 - American Indians and Alaskan Natives
 - People who have certain medical conditions. (*See CDC website*).
- **Report any influenza-related deaths** within 3 days to our Communicable Disease office.

For questions, please contact our Communicable Disease staff at 360-728-2235.

Background

It is still relatively early in the influenza season but we have already had three influenza-related deaths, five outbreaks at long-term care facilities reported, and a substantial climb in multiple markers of influenza activity within Kitsap County. Our weekly surveillance has shown a large upsurge in laboratory detections of influenza A over the past two weeks. Similarly, we are continuing to see increased visits for influenza-like illness. We expect to see further increases over the next several weeks.

Vaccination is one of our main tools for trying to reduce the burden of influenza illness and death in our community. It is not too late to vaccinate your patients. This is an especially important prevention strategy for persons at high risk for complications. We urge you to counsel your patients about the benefits of influenza vaccine and encourage vaccination among all eligible persons.

Remember that for the 2016-2017 season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended using the flu shot (inactivated influenza vaccine or IIV) and the recombinant influenza vaccine (RIV). Due to poor vaccine efficacy, CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) both advise that the nasal spray flu vaccine (live attenuated influenza vaccine or LAIV, “FluMist”) should not be used for anyone (adults or children) during 2016-2017.

Patients who have influenza may benefit from antiviral medications. However, appropriate antivirals should be administered as early as possible (ideally within 48 hours of illness onset), if indicated. Do not delay treatment while waiting for laboratory confirmation in any patient with confirmed or suspected influenza who is (a) hospitalized; (b) has severe, complicated, or progressive illness; or (c) is at high risk for influenza complications.

Resources

- Kitsap Respiratory Illness Report: www.kitsappublichealth.org/respiratory.pdf
- Washington State Influenza Update: www.doh.wa.gov/portals/1/documents/5100/420-100-fluupdate.pdf
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Influenza page for healthcare providers: www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/index.htm