

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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March 7, 2108

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Oneida County Health Department Updates on Flu Season

Central NY has been hit hard with the flu this year. Oneida County is continuing to see high numbers of positive flu cases. Flu cases are beginning to drop, but active cases of flu will circulate locally for many weeks ahead and transmission will continue to occur. According to the CDC, much of influenza illnesses this year are being caused by a strain of influenza A, called H3N2. The flu vaccine can protect against several strains of the flu virus. Based on preliminary effectiveness estimates, the CDC estimates that the flu vaccine is approximately 25% effective against the H3N2 strain <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6706a2.htm>. This is higher than estimates previously reported in the national news. The flu vaccine is showing higher effectiveness for H1N1 and influenza B strains (67 and 42% respectively for all age groups). Based on previous years' trends, Flu A cases typically start to decrease as Flu B increases. We are beginning to see that trend.

Oneida County Health Department wants to remind people that it is still not too late to get the flu vaccine. Please visit your doctor, local pharmacy, or OCHD clinic to get vaccinated. The flu vaccine can prevent you from getting sick, or if you do get sick, it can lessen the severity of the flu illness and prevent hospitalization. It generally takes two weeks for immunity to build after getting the flu vaccine.

Your next best defense against the flu is proper handwashing. The proper steps to washing your hands are as follows:

1. Wet your hands with warm running water.
2. Lather with soap and scrub between fingers, on the backs of your hands, and under nails.
3. Wash for at least 20 seconds or sing "Happy Birthday" twice.
4. Dry your hands. Use paper towels or electric hand dryers.
5. Use a paper towel when you turn off the tap.

When you are not able to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer or sanitizing wipes. If you go to the grocery store, clean the cart handle with a sanitizing wipe before use. When you return home make sure to wash your hands thoroughly.

If you are sick, it is best to stay home from work or school to avoid spreading germs to other people. Cough or sneeze into your upper arm, or use a tissue and then wash your hands. If you must go out in public (for instance, to seek medical care wear a mask). People who are very sick with flu-like symptoms and those who are at high risk of serious flu complications should see a health care professional as soon as possible to see if they should be treated with antiviral medication.

Please visit the flu page on our website for more information- ocgov.net/health/flu. For questions, or to schedule an appointment for a flu shot, please call the Oneida County Health Department at 315-798-5747.