



Kiowa County Health Department

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First Two Flu Deaths of the Season Reported

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) announced the first two deaths caused by the flu in the state. Both deaths occurred in patients who were over the age of 65. There have been 105 influenza-associated hospitalizations reported statewide.

The number of flu cases is relatively high for this time of year, and public health officials are concerned there will be a high risk of spreading the flu during the holiday season. The highest number of flu-related hospitalizations has occurred among those who are older than 50 years of age, as well as children younger than 5, which are both groups at greater risk of experiencing severe illness and complications due to flu.

The OSDH reminds the public that there are still several months left in the flu season. The single best way to protect against flu and its consequences is to get the flu vaccine. Many local county health departments, pharmacies and health care providers have vaccine and health officials urge everyone 6 months of age and older to get the vaccine to protect themselves and those around them from influenza, especially babies too young to receive a vaccination. It takes about two weeks after getting a flu shot for a person's immune system to respond and provide defenses against influenza viruses.

Those who already have the flu can spread it to others even before they feel sick. One may have the flu if they have some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue

It is important for those experiencing flu-like symptoms to consult with a health care provider as soon as possible. Antiviral drugs may be prescribed to treat the flu. These drugs work better for treatment when started within 48 hours of noticing symptoms. Influenza antiviral drugs may also be indicated as a prevention measure to protect those who have just been exposed to someone diagnosed with influenza and are especially vulnerable.

Certain people are at greater risk of serious flu-related complications. Young children, elderly persons, pregnant women and people with some long-term medical conditions are reminded to contact their health care provider as soon as they develop flu symptoms.

OSDH recommends staying home for at least 24 hours after a fever is gone. Avoid going to work, school, social events and public gatherings as well as traveling and shopping. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as acetaminophen before returning to a regular routine. To prevent the spread of the flu, the public is reminded to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash hands often.

The Kiowa County Health Department will be providing flu vaccine using the following fee schedule:

- All individuals with health insurance should bring their card. Their insurance company will be billed for the vaccine and an administration fee.
- Individuals who have no health insurance, whose health insurance does not cover flu vaccine, who are eligible for SoonerCare, or children 18 years of age and younger who are Native American or Alaskan natives may receive their vaccine at no charge.
- All others will be charged a fee of \$25 to cover the cost of the flu vaccine and the cost of administering the vaccine.

Clinic days and times are as follows:

Monday through Friday 8am until 5pm

The Kiowa County Health Department will accept SoonerCare, Medicare, all private health insurance, cash, checks, or credit cards as payment for flu vaccine. For more information about flu clinics at the Kiowa County Health Department, call (580)726-3316

For more information about influenza and activity updates, visit the Ok Flu View at flu.health.ok.gov.

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