



Kiowa County Health Department

### **For Immediate Release**

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### **Influenza Activity Increasing in Oklahoma: First Three Deaths of the Season Reported**

New influenza statistics released today by the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) indicate 204 people have been hospitalized, and three people have died in Oklahoma since reporting for the current flu season began Oct. 4, 2015. Influenza-associated hospitalizations have been reported statewide while three influenza-associated deaths have occurred among residents of Harper, Rogers and Tulsa counties.

Oklahoma has experienced a low level of activity during the first part of the flu season, but the recent occurrence of influenza-associated deaths highlights the importance for Oklahomans to protect themselves against the 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 still 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.

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

Most people with the flu have mild illness and do not need medical care or antiviral drugs. Those who get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to get medical care. If, however, they have flu-like symptoms and are very sick or worried about their illness, they should contact their health care provider.

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.

Health care providers will determine whether influenza testing and possible treatment are needed. A provider may prescribe antiviral drugs to treat the flu. These drugs work better for treatment when started within 48 hours of noticing symptoms. Antiviral drugs may be indicated as a prevention measure, especially for vulnerable persons such as infants less than 6 months old, or persons of any age with a medical condition which severely suppresses their immune system.



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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.

For more information about influenza and activity updates, visit the Ok Flu View at [www.ok.gov/health](http://www.ok.gov/health) and select the Ok Flu View link or contact the Kiowa County Health Department at 580-726-3316.