

## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

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### Influenza Case Confirmed in Southwest Nebraska

McCook – The first laboratory confirmed case of influenza in Southwest Nebraska has been reported to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD). Influenza is highly contagious and is caused by the influenza virus. The virus is spread from person to person primarily through droplets, which are released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. When people get the flu they may have a sudden onset of fever, chills, headache, dry cough or muscle aches. Illness may last several days to a week or more before recovery. The flu may be especially serious for the elderly and people with diabetes or heart, lung or kidney diseases.

“The flu season typically peaks in February. Although the first case of influenza in the eight-county health district has been reported this month, it does not mean that influenza is not still, or may not be, a risk to you,” states Jamey Keen, Public Health Nurse. “It is not too late, stop by our office to receive your flu vaccine today.”

#### Tips for Flu Prevention

1. **Stay home when you are sick, especially if you have a fever. You should be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours, without fever reducing medication, before you return to work or school.**
2. GET VACCINATED EACH YEAR.
3. Avoid close contact with people who are sick or with others if you are sick.
4. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, or cough into your inner elbow.
5. Wash your hands frequently and use soap.
6. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
7. Practice other good health habits such as getting plenty of sleep and exercise, managing your stress, drinking plenty of water and eating nutritious foods.

“Do not confuse influenza with GI virus better known as “stomach flu”. Influenza is in your lungs. GI virus attacks your stomach and/or digestive tract “states Myra Stoney, Director of SWNPHD. “The flu shot can protect you from getting influenza but it does not protect you from “stomach flu”.

SWNPHD and the CDC continue to recommend influenza vaccination for everyone 6 months and older this season. This year’s season does not appear to have yet peaked, so vigilance for influenza should be taken. While epidemics of flu happen every year, the timing, severity, and length of the epidemic is unpredictable and depends on many factors, including the circulating flu viruses and the match between circulating viruses and those in the vaccine.

#### Facts about Influenza (flu) Vaccine:

- The influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone over the age of 6 MONTHS.
- It takes approximately 2 weeks to receive complete immunity from influenza after getting the vaccine.
- Flu season typically peaks in February.
- Now is a good time to get vaccinated.
- Vaccination is particularly important for people with underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic illnesses.

**If you have not gotten vaccinated, it is not too late.** For some people, catching the flu could be deadly. It will take up to two weeks to be protected. It is possible to pass the flu virus to others (be contagious) one day before the fever and up to 5 or more days after. Contact your doctor or SWNPHD to get vaccinated now.

SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow counties. Call **308-345-4223** for more information. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> (one block north of Arby's) in McCook. More information can also be found on Facebook [www.facebook.com/swnphd](http://www.facebook.com/swnphd) or at [www.swhealthdept.com](http://www.swhealthdept.com).

SYMPTOM	COLD	FLU	GI (GASTROINTESTIONAL)
<b>Fever</b>	Rare	Usual; high (100-102 F)	Rare
<b>Headache</b>	Rare	Common	Rare
<b>General aches, pains</b>	Slight	Usual; often severe	Sometimes
<b>Fatigue, weakness</b>	Sometimes	Usual; up to 2-3 weeks	Sometimes
<b>Extreme exhaustion</b>	Never	Usual, at beginning	Rare
<b>Stuffy Nose</b>	Common	Sometimes	Rare
<b>Sneezing</b>	Usual	Sometimes	Rare
<b>Sore Throat</b>	Common	Sometimes	Rare
<b>Chest Discomfort, Cough</b>	Mild-Moderate hacking cough	Common, can be severe	Rare
<b>Vomiting and/or nausea</b>	Rare	Rare	Common
<b>Stomach ache, pain</b>	Rare	Rare	Common
<b>Diarrhea</b>	Rare	Rare	Common; defined as more than 6 stools in a 24 hour period.

Contact SOUTHWEST NEBRASKA PUBLIC HEALTH DEPT. @ 308-345-4223  
or go to the CDC site for more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>