

Health Unit Media Release

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Influenza has arrived in Eastern Ontario

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit is monitoring influenza in and around the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark region. **There have been cases of influenza in other parts of Eastern Ontario and it is likely that it will reach into our area soon.**

Influenza (the flu) is a serious viral illness that results in a combination of fever, cough, headache, muscle soreness, sore throat and stuffy nose, and can lead to pneumonia. It can also make other illnesses worse, especially those that affect the lungs and heart.

"Influenza spreads very easily from an infected person to others through coughing and sneezing," says Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. **"Avoid contact with those who are infected and wash your hands frequently to avoid spreading the virus.** Those who are ill should stay home, clean their hands frequently and cover their coughs and sneezes".

Influenza is also spread by direct contact with surfaces or objects like clothes, toys and eating utensils that have been infected by the virus. Frequent cleaning of hard surfaces and commonly touched areas is recommended to prevent the spread of influenza.

There is still time to get vaccinated if you have not received a flu shot already. **Call your health care provider, as most offices still have an inventory of influenza vaccine.** The most common type of influenza seen in Ontario this fall is covered by the current vaccine. ***The flu shot cannot give you influenza because it does not contain live virus.***

Antiviral medication can reduce the severity of influenza. Therefore, those who are very ill with the symptoms of influenza, particularly individuals who have a chronic disease, should seek medical advice early.

For more information on influenza or the flu vaccine, visit www.healthunit.org or call the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685.

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