

December 1, 2016

## **Influenza has arrived in the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties Health Unit area**

Influenza activity is approaching seasonal levels with many regions in Canada reporting increasing influenza activity. We have had our first individual diagnosed with influenza in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville with more individual diagnosed in our surrounding area. We have also had our first institutional outbreak of influenza A. The flu season usually lasts 6 to 8 weeks.

In Ontario and across both Canada and the States, the most common type of influenza A circulating is H3N2 which, in the past, can cause very serious illness among seniors, young children, and people with chronic health problems. This year's flu vaccine does include a component against H3N2.

Influenza (the flu) is a virus that can lead to a serious illness with symptoms of fever, cough, headache, muscle and joint aches, extreme fatigue and sore throat. The flu virus spreads easily to other people by droplets made when people with influenza cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouth, nose or eyes of people who are nearby. A person might also get the flu by touching something that has the influenza virus on it (such as someone's unwashed hands, toys, shopping cart) and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

**The best protection against influenza is immunization.** Immunization is recommended for everyone over 6 months of age. When you get the flu shot, you are protecting not only yourself, but your family, friends and co-workers. Also, if you are around people who might become seriously ill from influenza, then you are also protecting them.

Getting immunized against influenza is easy, convenient and free. The flu vaccine is available at your health care provider's office or at local pharmacies throughout Leeds, Grenville & Lanark (for those  $\geq 5$  years). Check out the list of 35 participating pharmacy locations at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org) or call 1-800-660-5853. The Health Unit is not holding any community flu clinics this year.

Keep in mind that after you get your flu vaccine, it takes about 2 weeks for you to be fully protected, so it's a great idea to get the vaccine at the beginning of the influenza season! Remember also to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, cover your coughs and sneezes and stay home if you are sick.

For the next two Fridays (Dec 2 & 9) from 10am -11am, a public health nurse will be available for the Health Unit's Flu Fact Fridays on Facebook. We have all heard people talk about the reasons they didn't get the flu shot, so we are celebrating the reasons people ARE getting their flu shot this year. Visit LGLHealthunit on Facebook and join in on the conversation.

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