



Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health Department Announces First Confirmed Flu Case in County

(Mason City) — The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health has their first confirmed case of influenza in the county. We've had many reports of rapid tests coming back positive for influenza, however this is the first confirmed case by the State Hygienic Lab.

“Fortunately, this year’s flu vaccine covers the confirmed strain,” says Jeni Stiles, Disease Prevention Specialist, Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health. “Following the Holiday season, it is common to see these illnesses begin to increase in circulation, and people need to take measures to stay healthy.”

Influenza is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Symptoms of influenza include: fever (usually high), headache, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, chills, fatigue, body aches, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Symptoms typically appear within 24-72 hours from exposure, with the illness lasting two to five days. People with the flu may be able to infect others by shedding the virus one day before getting sick to five to seven days after. That means you may be able to pass the flu on to someone else before you know you are sick. In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness, and dry cough are more common and intense. Colds are usually milder than the flu, and people with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose.

Norovirus has been another common complaint recently. Again, this is another illness that can gain activity following the holidays due to it being highly contagious. Most cases of influenza and norovirus are mild in severity. Some individuals such as infants, young children, elderly, and

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those with compromised immune systems may be at an increased risk for complications from these viruses.

Norovirus is a virus that causes your stomach and intestines or both to become inflamed (acute gastroenteritis). You may hear norovirus referred to as the “stomach flu”, however norovirus is not related to influenza. Norovirus is spread through direct contact with an infected person, contaminated food or water, or by touching contaminated surfaces. Norovirus may also become airborne if someone nearby is vomiting. The most common symptoms of norovirus include: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. You may also find headache, fever, chills, and body aches, which could lead to confusion between influenza and norovirus. Symptoms typically appear within 24-48 hours of exposure, with the illness lasting 24-48 hours. People are most contagious when sick, and during the first three days after their symptoms have stopped.

“Because colds and flu share many symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone,” says Jeni Stiles, Disease Prevention Nurse, Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health. “Whether you suspect you have the common cold, influenza, or norovirus, it is very important to increase fluids to prevent dehydration and get plenty of rest.”

Individuals should practice the following steps to limit the spread of the flu and norovirus:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. This will block the spread of droplets from your mouth or nose that could contain germs.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with individuals who are sick.
- If you or your children become ill with the flu, limit contact with others as much as possible to help prevent spreading the illness.
- Stay home or keep your child home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to seek medical care.

“It’s very important to keep commonly used surfaces sanitized throughout the day,” says Stiles. “Influenza has been shown to live on surfaces for up to eight hours.”

The Health Department still has flu vaccine available. Our Immunization Clinic is open Monday-Friday from 10:00 – Noon and 12:30 – 4:00 PM. The Health Department accepts most major health insurances.

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For more information about influenza, influenza prevention or the influenza vaccine, please call 641-421-9321 or visit our website at www.cghealth.com.

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