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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 9, 2017

First Flu Death in Oklahoma County and Hospitalizations Rise Substantially

OKC-County Health Department Offers Flu Prevention Tips

Oklahoma City, Okla. – [Oklahoma City-County Health Department](#) (OCCHD) recommends flu vaccinations and effective hand hygiene to avoid the ravages of flu this season. This comes after our first flu-related death of the season and number of flu hospitalizations increasing by 42 in Oklahoma County totalling 136 people – a significant jump compared to last year. In March 2016, Oklahoma County health professionals recorded 36 flu-related hospitalizations and zero deaths.

The number of flu-associated deaths in Oklahoma now stands at 23 people, which doubled from last week, and hospitalization totals rose from 584 people to 827. The number of reported influenza outbreaks in institutional settings, such as long-term health care facilities and schools, also picked up at the end of last week and has continued into this week. As in previous years, the highest rate of hospitalization has been among individuals 65 years of age and older followed by 0 to 4 years of age.

Data collected by hospitals and clinics statewide shows continued elevation in influenza activity. OCCHD stresses the best strategy to prevent flu remains to get a flu shot and good hand hygiene. Our experts note that having the shot often lessens the severity of the flu.

Vaccination is important for those at high risk from flu complications including people 65 years of age and older, young children, pregnant women, persons with chronic lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, neurologic conditions and other long-term health conditions.

Flu symptoms include:

- Fever more than 100.4° F (38 C)
- Aching muscles, especially in your back, arms and legs
- Chills and sweats
- Headache
- Dry, persistent cough
- Fatigue and weakness

(more)

- Nasal congestion

- Sore throat

OCCHD reminds the public to follow these prevention tips:

1. Frequent hand washing using soap and warm water, or alcohol based products.
2. Make “respiratory hygiene” a habit using tissues to cover coughs and sneezes.
3. Stay home from work, school and other public places while feeling ill.
4. If you suspect that you or your loved one has the flu, go to your physician as soon as possible. Antiviral medications are available to prevent or reduce the severity of flu and are most effective if started within 2 days of symptom onset.

OCCHD offers the flu vaccine at our three clinic locations. Learn more about our hours and locations at www.occhd.org/clinics or call 419-4261.

For more information about these tips or to schedule a clinic visit, please call Ken Johnson, OCCHD Media Relations Coordinator, at (405) 425-4315.

About Oklahoma City-County Health Department

Established in 1910, Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) is committed to protecting health, promoting wellness and preventing disease to ensure a healthy future for the Oklahoma County-area community. OCCHD was one of the first public health departments in the nation to receive accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board. For more information, please visit www.occhd.org.

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