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January 31, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Influenza is spreading quickly throughout Michigan. The number of young children presenting to emergency departments and hospitalized from the illness continues to rise and, as of January 13<sup>th</sup>, 30 children have died in the U.S. due to complications of the flu this season.

Influenza, also called “the flu”, is a respiratory viral illness that can cause fever, cough, chills, headache, muscle aches, runny nose and sore throat. With true influenza, a fever is almost always present and the cough is often severe. The flu usually last 2 to 7 days. Influenza is not the same as the “stomach flu,” which causes nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea that usually lasts 1 to 2 days.

Influenza spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes, causing droplets containing the virus to spread in the air. Uninfected people can become infected by being in close contact with these droplets (within 6 feet) and breathing them in or by touching surfaces the droplets fell onto.

There are many things that can be done to keep our schools, homes, and communities “flu-free” and protect ourselves and our loved ones:

1. It’s not too late to get vaccinated. Influenza vaccine is widely available through the local health department, area physicians and pharmacies. Everyone over the age of 6 months should get a flu shot.
2. As a general rule, children and adults should stay home when ill. We recommend that people sick with any influenza-like illness remain at home until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
3. Teach your family how to lower their risk of getting and spreading the influenza virus by:
  - Washing their hands often with soap and running warm water for at least 20 seconds.
  - If not able to wash their hands, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
  - Coughing or sneezing into their upper shirt sleeve or elbow—not onto their hands!
  - Avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth. That’s how germs enter the body.
4. Seek medical care immediately if your child experiences any of the following symptoms:
  - Illness lasting longer than a week or an illness that continues to get worse;
  - Fast breathing or trouble breathing;
  - Bluish skin color;
  - Not drinking enough fluids or not urinating;
  - Not waking up or not interacting with others as they normally do;
  - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held;
  - Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse coughing, or;
  - Fever with a rash

Sincerely,

Michelle Klein, RN, MA, PHC  
Director of Personal Health  
Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department