



MEDIA RELEASE

The City Of Yakima Fire Department is preparing for a potential spike in EMS responses as a direct result of the influenza outbreak spreading across the US. Currently, 41 states are experiencing above average emergency room visits. While most cases to date are caused by viruses other than influenza, flu activity is now on the rise and expected to get worse over the next few weeks. Everyone should take advantage of this window of opportunity to get vaccinated in order to have the best protection available throughout the flu season.

Influenza is a highly infectious disease of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness and lead to death. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, chills and achiness. Vaccination is the primary method for preventing influenza, and full protection occurs about two weeks after vaccination. Those needing a vaccine should contact their health care providers or find a community flu immunization location. Flu vaccination is especially important for those at high risk of having serious complications and those who live with or care for people at high risk. They include:

- Children under age five (especially those under two years of age)
- Adults age 65 years and older
- Pregnant women
- People who have certain conditions including asthma , neurological and neuro-developmental conditions, chronic lung disease, heart disease, blood disorders, diabetes, kidney disorders, liver disorders, metabolic disorders, obesity, a weakened immune system and those under age 19 who receive long-term aspirin therapy

It's also important for individuals living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities to get vaccinated. People who care for those at high risk for complications from flu include:

- Health care workers
- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
- Household contacts and caregivers of children under age five, especially those under six months of age who are at high risk but are too young to get vaccinated.

Influenza vaccination only works against the influenza viruses and does not protect against the many other viruses and bacteria that can cause upper respiratory disease. To help reduce the chances of catching either the flu or other illnesses the Yakima fire department is urging everyone to practice basic hygiene. These healthy habits include:

- Washing your hands frequently, especially after using the restroom and before and after eating;
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze;
- Not touching your nose, mouth or eyes to prevent the spread of germs;
- Staying home from work or school when sick.

The following websites feature additional information:

- Yakima Health District- <http://yakimahealthdistrict.org/w/>
- Center for Disease Control- <http://www.cdc.gov/>