

## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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### It's Not Too Late to Get a Flu Shot

Influenza has begun circulating at higher rates in southwest Nebraska, reports Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD). Influenza is a serious respiratory disease that affects about 30 million people annually in the United States and kills on average about 30,000 people. The best way to reduce your risk of getting sick or having serious complications from this preventable disease is to get an annual flu shot.

Influenza usually circulates in the United States from October through May each year. Last year the U.S. saw very little influenza thanks to the interventions used to slow the COVID-19 pandemic, such as masking and social distancing. There were only about 2,000 cases across the country and just under 650 deaths.

“Influenza (flu) is a respiratory illness which affects the nose, throat and lungs. You may spread the flu to other people even before you show symptoms,” states Melissa Propp, SWNPHD Clinic Manager. “From one day before becoming ill to between 5 to 7 days after illness is when you can infect others.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the best way to prevent getting influenza is to get a flu shot, which is approved for people aged 6 months and older. CDC also recommends everyday preventive actions like staying away from people who are sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and frequent handwashing to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses like flu.

Some people are at higher risk for developing flu-related complications or severe illness. These include:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum)
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

Despite recent rumors about the flu shot, COVID-19 vaccines are not included in the influenza vaccines. COVID and flu are two separate shots that can be given at the same time or on different days.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter or view the website [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Call (308) 345-4223 or stop by the office at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street in McCook for more information.

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