

Oregon Health Authority reminds residents to receive flu shots

Influenza cases are rising in Oregon, and although the increase is expected this time of year, Oregon Health Authority (OHA) officials say it shows flu season is off to a strong and early start.

It's also a good reminder that it's not too late to get a flu shot, said Paul Cieslak, MD, of the OHA Public Health Division.

"The winter months are a time when we find ourselves indoors a lot, gathering with family, friends and colleagues, and it's also a very good time for the flu virus to spread," said Cieslak, medical director in Public Health Division's Acute and Communicable Disease

Prevention Section and the Oregon Immunization Program. "People can get a vaccination now and be ready for the festivities."

During the week of Dec. 4-10, Oregon laboratories reported 207 specimens that were positive for influenza. That's up from 134 positive flu specimens during Nov. 27 through Dec. 3, and from 117 positive specimens during Nov. 20 through 27.

Most of the cases have been influenza A, this season's predominant flu type.

Hospitalizations have jumped sharply in recent weeks, too. So far, there have been a total of 66 hospitalizations for influenza-like ill-

nesses — based on monitoring in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties — since flu season began the first week of October.

That includes 23 hospitalizations the week of Dec. 4 through 10, up from 17 during Nov. 27 through Dec. 3, and 13 during Nov. 20 through 26.

There have been no pediatric deaths attributed to the flu this season, officials say. The Public Health Division does not track adult flu deaths.

"While this is shaping up to be a heavy flu season, this uptick during this time of the year is fairly typical," Cieslak said. "Flu season doesn't usually peak until late February

or early March, so people can and should get their flu shots."

Flu is a virus that causes mild to severe respiratory illness and can lead to hospitalization. The virus kills thousands of people in the U.S. each year. People who are at higher risk of severe illness or death include children, adults older than 65, pregnant women and those with chronic medical conditions or weak immune systems.

The flu vaccine is the best protection against flu. It can take up to two weeks to become effective, so getting it earlier in the season is ideal.

That said, it's not too late, since flu season usually lasts

until spring.

Vaccinations are recommended for everyone 6 months and older.

So far, flu vaccine manufacturers have shipped more than 1.1 million doses to Oregon during the 2016-2017 flu season. More than a million of these doses have been reported to Oregon's ALERT Immunization Information System as having been administered.

Other ways to help prevent flu:

- Stay home and limit contact with others if you are sick; that includes staying home from work or school when you are sick.

- Cover your nose and

mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue out when you are done.

- Wash hands with soap and water. Use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may have flu germs on them.

- Avoid getting coughed and sneezed on.

Flu vaccine is available from health care providers, local health departments and many pharmacies. To find a flu vaccine clinic, visit www.flu.oregon.gov and use OHA's flu vaccine locator tool.

THIS WEEK ON THE COAST

A WEEKLY LISTING OF COMMUNITY EVENTS IN THE FLORENCE AREA

SUBMIT ALL EVENTS INFORMATION VIA EMAIL TO PRESSRELEASES@THESIUSLAWNEWS.COM

Saturday, Dec. 24

CANDLE LIGHT SERVICES

• Florence Christian Church invites families and all members of the community to its Christmas Candle Light services today at 4 and 5:30 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 25, at 10 a.m., at Second and Ivy streets.

• A Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held at Resurrection Lutheran Church, located about one mile south of the Siuslaw River Bridge on Highway 101, at 5 p.m. The church is also having Christmas morning Sunday Services on Dec. 25 at 10 a.m. Everyone is welcome.

Upcoming events

NEW YEAR'S WALKABOUT

On Tuesday, Jan. 3, the Coastal

Gem Walkers will be walking the new Toledo Ridge and River YRE. This 10K walk includes some hilly areas that would be difficult for wheelchairs or strollers.

Those wishing to carpool to Toledo should meet at the Commons in Yachats. The carpool will depart at 9 a.m., so arrive a few minutes early.

Walkers can also meet at JC's Thriftway in Toledo at 10 a.m. to register for the walk.

The walk will begin at 10:15 a.m.

MORNING AFTER FUN RUN

The 30-plus year tradition continues in Old Town Florence during this year's annual Morning After Fun Run (walk or stroll) for those who want to "get going first thing next year."

The run/walk will take place

New Years Day, Sunday, Jan. 1, beginning at 10 a.m., under the Siuslaw River Bridge on Bay Street.

The walk/run is about 3.1 miles. Afterwards, share stories and hot drinks at Siuslaw Coffee Roasters in Old Town. There is no entry fee, no motorized things, no training, no racing and no complaining.

PEACE HIKE IN YACHATS

Start the New Year off by joining with the Yachats Trails Committee and other coastal residents for the Seventh Annual Yachats New Year's Day Peace Hike.

Participants should meet at the Yachats Commons, 441 N. Highway 10,1 in Yachats, at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Jan. 1, 2017.

For more information, contact

Joanne Kittel at jnkittel@peak.org, call 541-547-3144 or visit the Yachats Trails Committee online at www.yachatstrails.org.

CITY CLUB HOSTS BEAR, INSKIP

Emily Bear and Christy Inskip, who work with Lane County Prevention Section of Public Health, will speak at City Club of Florence Friday, Jan. 6, at Ocean Dunes Golf Links Club house at 3345 Munsel Lake Road.

A lunch menu is available from 11:30 a.m. to noon; the program runs from noon to 1 p.m. and is open to the public.

The talk will focus on what Lane County does for underage drinking and tobacco prevention and the work being done in the Siuslaw area.

For more information, call Ruth Baumrucker at 541-305-9003.

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148 Maple St. • PO Box 10 • Florence, OR 97439

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