

Avoid getting and spreading flu to others; telephone your health care provider unless symptoms are severe

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alabama is experiencing widespread influenza (flu) activity, and hospitals are at or over normal patient capacity due in large part to the number of patients presenting with seasonal influenza-like symptoms. Emergency departments and outpatient clinics are also seeing very high volumes of patients. At this time, this is not a pandemic flu situation, but a major seasonal flu situation.

To avoid getting and spreading the flu, the Alabama Department of Public Health urges the general public to following do10 Fight the Flu actions, for example:

- Get flu vaccine, it is not too late
- Stay at home if you have a fever
- Wash your hands
- Cover your cough and sneeze
- Clean and disinfect
- Learn home care

Flu can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

For people with mild to moderate flu or flu-like symptoms, please do not go to your doctor's office without calling first and do not go to the emergency room. Please call your doctor to see if you are eligible for antivirals without an appointment. Many insurance companies now have a "call a provider" service to help you with mild to moderate illnesses, please take advantage of this service before going to doctor or hospital. Mild to moderate cases of the flu usually do not require a hospital visit. Patients who do visit an emergency department or outpatient clinic should be aware of long wait times

Employers and schools that require doctor excuses for absences are asked to waive this requirement during this time to encourage those who are sick to stay home and not spread disease.

Acting State Health Officer, Dr. Scott Harris will conduct a press conference on tomorrow afternoon to provide additional information about Alabama's flu situation.

Visit alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization for more information on ways to avoid getting and spreading the flu and do10 Fight the Flu actions, go to <http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/influenza/prevention.html> and flu disease and vaccine, go to http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization/assets/Influenza_Disease_and_Vac_Flyer.pdf.