

Williams County Health Department

Main Office

310 Lincoln Ave.
Montpelier, OH 43543
Phone: (419) 485-3141
Fax: (419) 485-5420
www.williamscountyhealth.org



WIC Satellite Office

1399 E. High St.
Bryan, OH 43506
Phone: (419) 636-8754

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

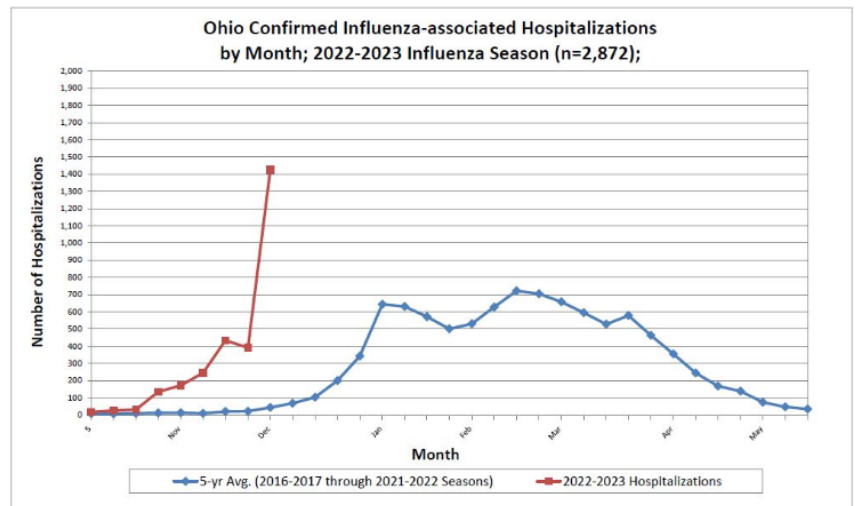
Contact: Rachel Aeschliman
Date: December 19, 2022
Phone: 419-485-3141 ext. 114

Flu Cases are on the Rise in Williams County

Protect Yourself and Others by Getting a Flu Shot

Montpelier, OH – Flu season is here, and Ohio is experiencing higher than normal rates of people infected and hospitalized by the flu this year. In Williams County, flu cases are also on the rise.

Flu cases spreading rapidly in the community can overwhelm both local and regional hospitals. Community Hospitals and Wellness Centers (CHWC) is reporting an increased number of influenza cases seen at both hospitals in Williams County (Bryan and Montpelier) as compared to 2021 and 2020. There have been 45 cases of influenza A seen at both hospitals in the month of December.



Although there have been no admissions from these cases, patients in our community are ill enough to be seeking emergent care. With an increase in the influenza numbers, added to COVID-19, and Rhino Syncytial Virus (RSV) numbers, there is an ongoing concern the Emergency Departments in Williams County will struggle with capacity. There is also concern that our inpatient units will be at capacity as well, furthering the strain on our healthcare system. Regionally (Toledo to Ft. Wayne, IN), there have been issues with other hospital systems being unable to assist with our increased patient volumes. This has been particularly concerning with children suffering from influenza and RSV.

Parkview Physicians Group (PPG) has also seen an increase in flu cases among patients. Starting Monday, December 19th, PPG Ohio will resume masking requirements in all direct patient care areas within its clinics. PPG will continually evaluate respiratory virus activity and adjust its policies as needed.

Local providers are recommending if you or your loved ones are ill, please stay home and try to stay away from others, use good hand hygiene, wipe down surfaces that are frequently touched, do not be afraid to wear a mask around others if you cannot stay home, and please get vaccinated.

The WCHD & local providers recommend taking the following precautions to keep yourself and your family healthy this flu season:

1. **Get your flu shot.** Getting your flu vaccine is the easiest way to protect yourself from getting the flu. When you receive your flu vaccine, your body's immune system works hard to build protection against the flu virus. Everyone should get the flu vaccine, especially those older than 65, pregnant people, those with chronic conditions, and children under 5 years old. COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters for those 6 months and older are also recommended.
2. **Wash your hands, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.** Keep your hands clean to avoid getting the flu or spreading it to others. Make sure you are washing your hands with warm water for at least 20 seconds. If washing your hands is not possible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth throughout the day.
3. **Cover your coughs and sneezes.** Coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into your elbow is an effective way to avoid spreading germs to others. Always wash your hands after coughing or sneezing into a tissue or if you coughed or sneezed into your hands.
4. **Adopt healthy habits.** Making healthy choices every day can help your body fight off all illnesses, including the flu. Eating a balanced diet, staying hydrated, exercising regularly, and getting enough sleep can help your body stay healthy and strong to fight off the flu quickly.
5. **Stay home when sick.** If you are experiencing symptoms, stay home and away from others to prevent the spread of illness. Stay home until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines, or after symptoms have improved.

Most local pharmacies offer flu shots, and the Williams County Health Department offers walk-in vaccines on Mondays and by appointment. If you have any questions about the flu or the flu vaccine, contact your healthcare provider or call 419-485-3141 to talk with one of our public health nurses.

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For more information go to www.williamscountyhealth.org or call 419-485-3141.