

## Public Health Alert: Influenza Season 2018

Submitted by Vicki Faciane, Director of Health & Human Services

*The following Public Health Alert was taken from a release sent to Tribes on Friday, January 12, 2018 concerning the current influenza outbreak in the United States. Even though you may be hearing reports that the flu shot may not be as effective this year, you should still get your flu shot unless you have a medical reason for not doing so. There are many strains of influenza that circulate each year and the flu vaccine just might keep you from getting influenza. If you have any questions about influenza or the flu vaccine, talk to your healthcare provider or visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>.*

Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director along with Dr. Dan Jernigan, Captain, U.S. Public Health Service held a telebriefing on widespread Influenza (flu) activity, Friday, January 12, 2018 detailing the increased seasonal flu activity in the United States as well as the increase in physician/healthcare provider visits for flu-like symptoms. Data shows that in the past week the number of states reporting widespread flu activity increased from 36 to 46.

It is important to note that the flu is a contagious respiratory illness that can range from mild to severe and can lead to hospitalization or death. The best way to prevent the infection is the flu vaccine. The flu vaccine is recommended by the CDC for people ages 6 months or older. Individuals should talk to their healthcare provider about getting the flu shot. The vaccine is especially important for those who are high risk for complications (i.e. pneumonia and bronchitis) or live with/care for someone who is high risk for complications. High risk individuals include:

- Pregnant women
- Children
- Elders (**The flu is one of the leading causes of death among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) elders.**)

Flu vaccines can be given at the following:

- Tribal Health
- IHS Clinic
- Local healthcare facility
- Mobile or community-based clinics
- Pharmacy or grocery store

In addition to the flu vaccine other ways to help prevent the spread of the flu is to wash your hands often, cover your coughs and sneezes, and to stay home if you are sick.

With the increase in flu activity people should be aware of the following symptoms:

- Fever/feeling feverish, chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Vomiting or diarrhea (more common in children)

Those who become sick with flu may be prescribed antiviral drugs. Check the following to learn more about seasonal flu or access resources <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/index.html>, <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/symptoms.htm>, or [https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/native/protect\\_circle\\_life\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/native/protect_circle_life_factsheet.pdf)