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PREVENT THE SPREAD OF INFLUENZA (THE FLU)

The Department of Public Health and Social Services would like to remind everyone that as the 12th Festival of Pacific Arts (Festpac) is coming to an end, we want to ensure that everyone continues to take the following actions to protect yourself and others from diseases such as influenza (the flu).

Influenza is a highly contagious viral disease usually affecting the nose, throat and lungs. It may cause symptoms that are more severe than the common cold and can result in complications that may lead to death, even in otherwise healthy individuals.

It is primarily spread by person to person contact via coughing or sneezing. Flu symptoms include: cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, fever, chills, and body aches. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea.

The Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) encourages residents to protect themselves and their loved ones during the influenza season. The best way to prevent the spread of Influenza is by getting a flu shot each year. Talk to your pharmacist, doctor or other healthcare provider to see if a flu shot is right for you.

Frequent hand washing with soap and water (additional use of hand sanitizers is optional) and cleansing of exposed surfaces is also very important.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older get vaccinated against the flu every year unless they have had a severe allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.

Flu prevention tips:

1. Get vaccinated.
    - A yearly flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older.
    - Vaccination is especially important for protecting those at high risk for serious flu complications, including: young children, pregnant women, adults 65 years and older, and anyone with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease.

2. Stop the spread
    - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
    - Stay home when you are sick.
    - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
    - Wash your hands often
    - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
3. Take medicine
    - Use medication as recommended by your doctor to treat the flu.

All health care providers are urged to review and update the immunization status of all patients they see. If vaccination is contraindicated because of illness, a follow-up appointment should be scheduled to update vaccination as soon as the illness is over.

For more information, please call your primary health care provider or the Department of Public Health and Social Services' Immunization Program at 735-7143.

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