



# KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**NEWS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Flu Facts: How You Can Help Keep Our Community Healthy**

KALAMAZOO, MI – The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department, Ascension’s Borgess Health and Bronson Healthcare encourage the community to help stop the spread of the flu and to know their flu facts.

Flu (Influenza) is a serious and contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and even death. Like most of the country, southwest Michigan has been hit hard this influenza season. The total number of cases of influenza and influenza-like illness reported to the Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department continues to increase. “The number of cases reported during the week ending January 26, 2018, nearly doubled the number reported during the previous week. Currently, the dominant virus being reported is Influenza A,” says Dr. William Nettleton, Kalamazoo County WMed Medical Director.

Residents can best fight the flu by taking three steps recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during the flu season:

1. **Get a flu vaccine.** Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a [flu vaccine](#). Receiving the vaccine early is the first and most important step in protection against the flu. It is not too late to receive the vaccine, and residents are strongly encouraged to do so. As of January 26, 35% of Kalamazoo County children between the ages of 6 months to 18 years received the flu vaccine.
2. **Take everyday actions to stop the spread of germs.** Try to avoid close contact with sick people, and if you [become sick](#), limit your contact with others. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and wash your hands well and often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If you are a caretaker for someone with the flu, wash your hands after touching the sick person and after handling their tissues or laundry.
3. **Create and maintain a healthy home and work environment.** The flu virus can survive on surfaces for up to 24 hours. Clean hard surfaces more often than

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**HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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usual and disinfect shared things like remote controls and computer keyboards. In shared environments make disposable disinfectant wipes available to encourage users to wipe down “high-touch” objects such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, remote controls, keyboards, and telephones before each use.

“To stop the spread of the flu in our community, we all need to do our part. We can’t stress enough how important it is for people to stay home if they are sick,” says Dr. Richard VanEnk, director of infection prevention at Bronson Healthcare. “Children who are ill should be kept home from school, and not sent back before the infection is cleared.”

Here are a few guidelines from the CDC:

- Most people with the flu have mild illness and can be treated with over-the-counter medication. If you have a fever, make sure the medicine you choose has a fever reducing component. If your doctor prescribes antiviral medication, be sure to follow your doctor’s orders with the prescription.
- If you are in a high risk group or very sick, contact your health care provider
- The emergency room should only be used for people who are very sick. You should not go to the emergency room if you are only mildly ill or for laboratory testing.

We are approximately halfway through the influenza season, but the importance of getting an influenza vaccination cannot be overemphasized. “The number of patients hospitalized with influenza in Michigan is at an all-time high,” says Dr. David Davenport, medical director of infection prevention and control at Borgess Health. “Even in settings where it offers partial protection, the influenza vaccination significantly reduces the risk of hospitalization and other serious complications including death. We owe it to ourselves, our coworkers, our families and our community to limit the spread of this particularly virulent strain of influenza.”

You can find flu vaccination clinics near you by using the website [www.vaccinefinder.org](http://www.vaccinefinder.org). You can also contact your primary care physician or visit the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department’s Immunization Clinic at 3299 Gull Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49048. The Immunization Clinic offers daily walk-in hours for adults and children. For more information on the Immunization Clinic contact [www.kalcounty.com/hcs](http://www.kalcounty.com/hcs) or call (269) 373-5200.

Weekly Flu Reports are posted on the main page of Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department’s website, [www.kalcounty.com/hcs](http://www.kalcounty.com/hcs), under the “Hot Topics” section. This report is updated every Wednesday and provides a snapshot of the flu activity within Kalamazoo County.

#### **Additional Resources:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Prevent Seasonal Flu

- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/index.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Frequently Asked Flu Questions for 2017-18 Influenza Season

- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season-2017-2018.htm>

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, Information on Vaccines for Children

- <https://ivaccinate.org/>

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