



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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Health Officials Remind Kalamazoo County to Get Flu Vaccine

KALAMAZOO, MI—Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department wants to remind Kalamazoo County residents to get vaccinated against the flu to protect themselves and their loved ones from the influenza virus. Every person six months and older should get an annual flu vaccine, especially certain groups considered at the highest risk, like young children, pregnant women, adults who have chronic health conditions, or adults over the age of fifty.

Influenza is a serious respiratory illness that occurs seasonally nationwide. The flu season typically starts in October and can last as late as May. The flu shot takes approximately two weeks to provide full protection against the influenza virus. It is recommended that residents receive their vaccine before the holiday season begins. Getting a flu vaccine this fall can reduce your risk of getting the flu and help save scarce medical resources needed to care for people with COVID-19.

Anyone can get the flu, including healthy children and adults. Symptoms of influenza, which are similar to COVID-19 symptoms, include fever or feeling feverish/chilled, body aches, cough, sore throat, or fatigue. As the coronavirus pandemic continues to affect Kalamazoo County communities, getting the flu vaccine is one of the best ways to reduce respiratory illness circulating in the area. While preventive actions recommended to reduce the risk of COVID-19 such as wearing a face covering and social distancing may also help to reduce the risk of flu transmission, it is important to get the flu vaccine, which is the most effective way to prevent the virus altogether. It is a myth that the influenza vaccine causes the flu; it does not. Furthermore, if a person becomes infected with influenza even after being vaccinated, they are less likely to become severely ill, become hospitalized or die.

"With COVID-19 still spreading, getting the flu shot is more important than ever to stay healthy. The influenza vaccine is a safe and effective way to reduce illness, school or work absences, hospital stays, and death due to the flu. The more people are protected from the flu, the more hospital beds and testing supplies can be available during the COVID-19 pandemic. This further protects yourself, your family, and your community," states Dr. William Nettleton, Medical Director for Kalamazoo County.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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If you receive a vaccination and still get the flu, the vaccine may make flu symptoms milder and the length of illness shorter. The vaccine will also prevent you from spreading the flu to others, including those at risk of more serious illness. Additionally, these simple steps can help stop the spread of flu or other germs and help protect you from getting sick:

- Stay home when you are sick, which will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean your hands often, with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department offers flu vaccinations Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with no appointment needed. For people seeking a flu vaccine for children eleven years old or under, scheduling an appointment is encouraged by calling 269-373-5203. A flu vaccine is also available at local medical offices, pharmacies, and community events. You can visit www.vaccinefinder.org for more local options. Always call before visiting to ask about payment, required insurance and forms, and COVID-19 safety measures in place. Most insurance plans will cover the vaccine cost, but no one will be turned away from the health department for an inability to pay.

For questions regarding the influenza vaccine or for information about county influenza vaccination coverage, visit www.kalcounty.com/hcs/flu vaccine/.

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