



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY  
**Health Department**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Cases of Influenza are Increasing**

Influenza illness has increased gradually in Helena since the first cases were reported in mid-December. In January, an average of five cases per week have been reported to the health department. As the virus circulates in the community, more people get exposed, so more influenza cases are likely. According to the CDC, annual epidemics of influenza typically occur during the fall or winter months, but the peak of influenza activity can occur as late as April or May.

“A lot of common colds that circulate in winter are collectively known as “the flu,” said Mike Henderson, RN, Lewis & Clark County Health Department Disease Control & Prevention Administrator. So, how do you know if you have “the flu” and not a cold? Influenza is much more serious. It comes with a high fever, severe muscle aches and extreme exhaustion that can last for two weeks. On average, 225,000 people are hospitalized every year because of influenza, and 36,000 people die.

<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Cold</b>	<b>Flu</b>
<b>Fever</b>	Rare in adults and older children, but can be as high as 102°F in infants and small children	Usually 102°, but can go up to 104°F and usually last 3 to 4 days
<b>Headache</b>	Rare	Sudden onset and can be severe
<b>Muscle aches</b>	Mild	Usual, and often severe
<b>Tiredness and weakness</b>	Mild	Can last 2 or more weeks
<b>Extreme exhaustion</b>	Never	Sudden onset and can be severe
<b>Runny nose</b>	Often	Sometimes
<b>Sneezing</b>	Often	Sometimes
<b>Sore throat</b>	Often	Sometimes
<b>Cough</b>	Mild hacking cough	Usual, and can become severe

Influenza is highly contagious. A cough or a sneeze launches the virus into the air and onto nearby surfaces. Should your hand touch that contaminated surface, and you then rub your eyes, nose or mouth, you could be infected.

Your best defense against acquiring influenza and its complications: Get a flu shot if you haven't already none so. Also remember to wash your hands often and keep them away from your eyes, nose and mouth. Flu shots are still available at the City-County Health Department every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 11 AM – 4:30 PM. For more information, call the flu hotline at 457-8904 or stop by the health department at 1930 Ninth Avenue.

In addition, antiviral medicine is available that can reduce the duration of uncomplicated influenza when administered within two days of illness onset to otherwise healthy children or adults. These medications can also be effective in preventing a person from catching the flu after a close contact is diagnosed. Antiviral medicine is available by prescription only.

*The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.*

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