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## News Release

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John R. Kasich / Governor  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Ohio Department of Health Announces Flu Activity in Ohio is Now Widespread**

*ODH Stresses Still Time to Get Influenza Vaccine*

COLUMBUS – Influenza activity is now widespread in Ohio, meaning that there are increasing reports of influenza-like illness in more than half the regions in the state, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) announced today.

During this flu season, which started in October and likely will continue into spring, 833 influenza-associated hospitalizations have been reported to ODH. The highest number of such hospitalizations has been reported in northeast and east central Ohio but activity in other parts of the state is quickly increasing. At this time during the 2012/2013 flu season, 1,922 hospitalizations had been reported. No pediatric fatalities have been reported this season in Ohio.

“Because the flu virus is now widespread throughout Ohio, immunization is all the more essential,” said ODH Director, Dr. Ted Wymyslo. “Immunization is the safest and most effective way to fight the flu so I encourage all Ohioans who have not already done so to get vaccinated today.”

Symptoms of influenza can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Although most people fully recover from the flu, a small portion of people do experience severe illness (like pneumonia and respiratory failure), and sometimes the flu can be fatal. Anyone who becomes ill with the flu and is pregnant, is younger than five years of age or is elderly, has an underlying medical condition or experiences a particularly severe form of the illness should contact their healthcare provider immediately. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) vaccine experts recommend that everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year.

Most of the flu circulating in Ohio is the H1N1 strain from the 2009 influenza season, which is now considered a commonly circulating seasonal influenza strain. This strain disproportionately affects young and middle-aged adults. Fortunately, H1N1 is one of the flu strains included in this year’s vaccine.

While vaccine provides the greatest protection against the flu, other effective ways to reduce the spread of illness include: washing hands frequently, or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer; covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, or coughing or sneezing into elbows; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth; and staying home when sick and until fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.

Flu vaccine is available at most healthcare providers’ offices, local health departments and retail pharmacy chains. For more information on influenza, including where to find vaccine, visit [www.flu.ohio.gov](http://www.flu.ohio.gov).

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