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National Influenza Vaccination Week **Highlights Importance of getting a Flu Shot**

(Sedgwick County, Kan.) – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established National Influenza Week (December 2-8, 2018) to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond. National Influenza Week reminds us it's not too late to get your flu shot. Also, as long as flu viruses are spreading and causing illness, vaccination should continue throughout the flu season, which continues into May.

Sedgwick County Division of Health (SCDOH) officials say that vaccination (flu shot) remains the best way to protect yourself and your family from becoming ill with the flu. SCDOH flu shots are free to uninsured adults age 19 and older and to children age 18 and younger with CHIP, Medicaid, Amerigroup, United Healthcare or Sunflower. A sliding fee scale from \$2 - \$20.26 will be applied to uninsured children age 18 and younger. Please remember the following:

- Residents who do not qualify for flu shots at the SCDOH should contact their insurance companies to find out where flu shots are covered by their plans, and use the online flu vaccine finder at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/> (located at the bottom right corner of the page) to find the nearest location.
- Residents who qualify may visit the SCDOH's Main Clinic at 2716 W. Central; clinic hours are:
 - 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Wednesday;
 - noon to 6:30 p.m., Thursday;
 - 8-5 p.m. (no walks-ins after 4:30 p.m. for immunizations), Friday.

- Proof of income, such as pay stubs, tax returns, bank statements, an award letter, or a letter from your employer, is required to qualify for the sliding fee scale.

Flu is caused by influenza viruses, and is spread mainly by coughing, sneezing and close contact. Anyone can contract the flu, which strikes suddenly and can last several days. Symptoms vary by age, but can include: fever/chills, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, cough, headache, runny or stuffy nose.

“An annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect against this potentially serious disease,” SCDOH Director Adrienne Byrne said. “Flu vaccine can reduce flu illnesses, doctor visits, missed work and school, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalization.”

You can prevent the spread of flu with these steps:

1. Get a flu vaccination.
2. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently. Use hand sanitizer if soap and running water are not available.
3. Cough and sneeze into your elbow, not your hands.
4. Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
5. Eat healthy foods and get plenty of rest.
6. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
7. Stay home if you become ill.

There is no live virus in flu shots, and the vaccine cannot cause the flu. The SCDOH and the CDC recommend the flu vaccine, because it can keep you from getting flu, make flu less severe if you do get it, and keep you from spreading flu to your family and other people.

Flu vaccinations can be life-saving in children and are recommended for anyone six months or older, unless otherwise directed by a physician. Additional populations at higher risk are people aged 50 years and older, people with compromised immune systems, pregnant women (during and after pregnancy), people extremely obese, residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, and those planning to travel outside of the United States. If you are not in a high-risk group, please get vaccinated if you spend time with anyone who is, or with anyone who is unable to get vaccinated, such as infants under six months old.

When researching questions about receiving the flu shot for you and your family, please remember to visit reputable sites where advice is based on medical research such as: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>, or <https://www.vaccines.gov/diseases/flu/index.html>. Please visit www.flu.gov for information about resources in your area or please call our Immunizations Line at (316) 660-7362.

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