

# Your Health Matters

## FIGHT OFF THE FLU

If you haven't had the flu yet this year, I am sure you know someone who has. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report 37 children have died from flu so far, this year, and across the nation states continue to report widespread flu activity. Here in Montgomery County, we had 181 cases of flu reported, plus one death. We know that is only a glimpse of the total flu in our community.

In Missouri, as of January 27<sup>th</sup>, there have been 9,566 cases of the flu reported and 888 deaths. The flu season usually peaks in February, but it can run all the way into May. Because we have many more weeks of the flu season to go, there is still value in getting a flu shot. The vaccine takes about two weeks to build up immunity in your body, but then it offers protection for several months.

People at highest risk for complications from the flu are children under 5 years old, senior adults, pregnant women, and people with underlying medical conditions like diabetes, heart disease or lung disease. It is very important that we all get a flu shot to help protect these vulnerable members of our community.

In addition to getting vaccinated, there are things you can do to help prevent the spread of flu in our community. If you are sick, stay home and call your healthcare provider! Flu is spread on droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and these droplets can travel up to 8 feet. The flu virus can also be spread on hands, surfaces, or objects that have been contaminated with the virus. When a sick person goes out into the community, he can spread the flu virus to other people he talks to or shakes hands with. He can also spread the flu by touching common surfaces like handrails, doorknobs, or shopping carts.

If you are not sick, you can protect yourself and your family from the flu by getting a flu shot. You can also avoid large crowds where the risk of someone coughing or sneezing on you will be higher. You can keep a distance of at least six feet between you and anyone who is sick. It is also important to wash your hands often with soap and water.

This flu season, we all need to pull together as a community to help protect our neighbors. Get a flu shot. Stay home if you are sick. And wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at [www.montgomerycountyhealth.org](http://www.montgomerycountyhealth.org) or on Facebook or Twitter @healthyMOCO. ■

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