

## News Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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### Have You Gotten Your Flu Shot?

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) encourages you to get your flu shot before influenza begins to circulate in our area. Influenza (flu) is a serious respiratory disease that affects about 30 million people annually in the United States. The best way to reduce the risk of having serious complications from this preventable disease is to get an annual flu shot.

“With the cooler weather setting in and people staying indoors more, we are seeing a lot of respiratory viruses going around,” states Melissa Propp, SWNPHD Public Health Nurse. There were 63 cases of COVID-19 reported to SWNPHD last week. So far RSV and flu are at low levels in the health district. “Now is the perfect time to get your flu shot before the holiday season begins, since it takes two weeks for your body to develop immunity after getting a flu shot.”

Influenza usually begins to circulate around October and goes through May. Some people are at higher risk for developing flu-related complications or severe illness. These include:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum)
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

The flu shot is approved for people aged 6 months and older. SWNPHD also recommends everyday preventive actions like staying home if you are sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and frequent handwashing to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses like flu, RSV and COVID-19. Flu shots do not contain the COVID-19 vaccine. There are two separate shots for flu and COVID-19 which can be given on the same day or on different days.

“You may spread the flu to other people even before you show symptoms,” explains Propp. “This can happen as early as one day before becoming sick and up to a week afterwards. Having a flu shot on board even if you are young and healthy can help stop the spread of flu in our area.”

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, You Tube and TikTok or view the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) which contains many resources. For more information call (308) 345-4223; one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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