

Flu season isn't over yet, practice good hygiene

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

While this year's flu season has peaked in parts of Colorado, including the Denver metropolitan area, the disease still is circulating and just now peaking in other parts of the state. Practicing prevention against the disease still is key.

Joni Reynolds, director of the Colorado Immunization Program at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, said, "While flu appears to have peaked, there still is much flu activity in the community. At this time, the best way to protect yourself and others from the illness is to practice good hygiene such as washing your hands frequently, covering your cough and staying home when you're sick."

Reynolds explained the best prevention against flu is to be immunized. However, in those parts of the state where the flu already has peaked, it's most likely too late for a vaccination so practicing healthy habits is important.

"It is best practice to receive the flu vaccine in the fall, since flu usually peaks during the winter months. It takes two weeks from the time an individual is vaccinated to develop immunity against influenza. It's also important to make sure the second dose of flu vaccine is given to those young children who might need both doses to be fully immunized," she explained.

This flu season, 660 flu-related hospitalizations have been reported from 43 counties, with a total of nine deaths. Last year's flu season, which was dominated by the 2009 H1N1 influenza, resulted in 2,041 hospitalizations and 69 flu-related deaths. The H1N1 strain has not been as dominant this flu season, with only 65 of the 660 reported hospitalizations being from the 2009 H1N1 strain.

In terms of hospitalizations this flu season, Denver County leads with 109 to date. Arapahoe County comes in second (87) and El Paso County is third (73).