

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2018

### **Flu cases on the rise; health officials say prevention is key**

**EDINBURG** – Hidalgo County health officials report a major increase in flu activity and urges residents to get vaccinated and take precaution to prevent illness. Health and Human Services Chief Administrative Officer Eduardo “Eddie” Olivarez said local hospitals and medical facilities and health officials along the U.S.-Mexico border are reporting an uptake in flu cases.

“The increase in influenza cases mirrors what is happening statewide,” said Olivarez. “Not only did the 2017-2018 flu season start early, but we are seeing increased doctor visits and hospitalizations.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, flu season usually peaks in February, however this year many states, including Texas, are already reporting widespread flu activity. Since November, the Health and Human Services Department has seen an increase in influenza-like illness, cases in Hidalgo County, particularly in elementary schools.

Getting vaccinated is the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. The Health Department offers the vaccine for \$20 for adults and \$15 for children, if uninsured, at county health clinics. Some clients with insurance, CHIP and Medicaid may qualify to receive the vaccine at no cost. Visit [www.hchd.org](http://www.hchd.org) for clinic listings and contact information. Residents may also choose to obtain the vaccine at other locations, including physician offices and pharmacies. Visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) for flu updates and information.

The best way to stay healthy is to follow the 3 C’s: cover, clean and contain. Residents are urged to cover their mouth when they sneeze or cough in order to avoid spreading germs. You should also clean your hands frequently with soap and water. And finally, if you have flu systems, contain the infection by staying home from work or school; influenza requires 4-5 days of bed rest, with a physician’s approval.

Symptoms of influenza include high fever (between 100°-104°), body aches and listlessness. Children and the elderly are the most vulnerable to the virus. If you feel you have the flu, you are encouraged to contact your physician immediately and schedule an appointment.

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