



FOR RELEASE
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Yukoners can still protect themselves against the flu

WHITEHORSE—Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Brendan Hanley, says Yukoners still have time to protect themselves against this year's flu virus.

"I can't emphasize enough the importance of immunization," Hanley said. "Influenza arrived in Yukon several months earlier than usual, and with more than 25 lab confirmed cases to date, we have already reached last year's total. Furthermore we have several more months of flu season to go."

Hanley noted those 25 cases probably represent about 10 per cent of the people who are actually ill with flu this year because many folks don't see a doctor.

"We have however seen a surge in clinic visits lately as influenza illness and other respiratory viruses made their mark through the December holidays. Unfortunately, an early start does not predict an early finish: we still expect that influenza will be around for at least the rest of the winter and likely well into spring.

"There are also other influenza-like-illnesses and respiratory illnesses making the rounds of the territory, as well as gastrointestinal viruses causing vomiting and diarrhea," Hanley added. "People may think that our remoteness might protect us here in Yukon but that's not the case. We are seeing similar patterns of illness that are occurring in our neighbours and across the country."

Hanley says the most important message to get out is that people should be immunized against the flu. Free flu immunizations are available at rural community health centres or at drop-in immunization clinics located at the Whitehorse and the Kwanlin Dün health centres. Dedicated flu clinics are being held at Whitehorse Health Centre on Friday, January 18 and Friday, January 25 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

He also reiterated the importance of hand washing to prevent the spread of germs, coughing into your elbow and staying home when you are ill so not to share germs.

For individuals who are otherwise healthy, influenza is generally mild to moderate. However, severe illness, complications and worsening of other health conditions can occur especially among those with underlying medical conditions, seniors and young children.

Flu symptoms include rapid onset of fever, cough, sore throat, aches and pains. Rest and symptomatic treatment are usually all that is needed.

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