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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Important Tips for Preventing Cold and Flu

Manchester, NH – The Manchester Health Department is reminding the community that common colds, influenza (“the flu”) and other viruses, such as norovirus (“the stomach bug”), are actively circulating, statewide. These illnesses can be prevented if people take appropriate precautions to reduce their risk of infection.

According to Anna Thomas, MPH, Manchester’s Public Health Director, “As with every year, we expect that common colds, influenza, and norovirus are present in the community. This is particularly true during the colder months when people spend more time in closer quarters. Fortunately, there are steps that you can take to reduce your risk of getting sick from these and other infections. Please review the following information on how you can keep yourself and your loved ones healthy.”

Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by the flu virus. The flu is different from a cold. Flu symptoms usually come on suddenly and include: fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue (tiredness). Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, but this is more common in children than adults. People with flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to up to 5 to 7 days after.

To prevent the spread of the flu, we recommend the following:

- Get your flu shot if you haven’t had one yet this season;
- **Wash your hands often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water;**
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze and throw tissues in the trash after you use them;
- Clean surfaces that may be contaminated with flu viruses;
- ***If you get sick, stay home from work, school, or daycare until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines; and***
- Take an antiviral medication if your doctor prescribes it.

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Norovirus is a very contagious virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea. Norovirus is not related to the flu, which is caused by the influenza virus. The most common symptoms are: diarrhea, vomiting, nausea and stomach pain. Some people may have low-grade fever, headaches, and generalized muscle aches. You can get norovirus from: having direct contact with an infected person, consuming contaminated food or water, or touching contaminated surfaces then putting your unwashed hands in your mouth. People become ill within 12-48 hours after exposure to norovirus, and the illness typically lasts 24 to 72 hours.

To prevent the spread of norovirus, we recommend the following:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, for 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating any food;**
- Cook all shellfish thoroughly before eating;
- Wash raw vegetables before eating;
- After having vomiting or diarrhea, immediately clean and disinfect surfaces* and wash soiled laundry;
- Avoid preparing food for others while sick and for two days after symptoms stop; and
- ***Stay home from work, school or daycare while you are sick and for two days after your symptoms have stopped.***

The Manchester Health Department also encourages all residents to maintain a healthy life throughout the year. By doing so, you are helping to support your immune system defend against virus when cold and flu season hits. Additional steps one can take are:

1. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
2. Get at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week.
3. Get enough sleep.
4. Keep your weight healthy.
5. Don't drink too much alcohol.
6. Don't smoke.
7. See your doctor regularly.

For more information, please go to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/influenza/index.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/>

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/documents/norovirus.pdf>

* Bleach and water solutions or steam cleaning are recommended for cleaning surfaces and carpets of norovirus; standard disinfectants may not be effective at inactivating the virus. For more information, please go to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/about/prevention.html>

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-06/documents/list_g_norovirus.pdf

https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/zoonotic/facts-resources/diseases-by-animal/dogs/~/_media/depts/health/communicable-diseases/documents/zoonotic/bleach-dilution-calculator.ashx

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