



Community Talking Points

Nov. 2, 2020

- This fall and winter will be a challenge as both influenza and COVID-19 viruses circulate among people in Wood County. The good news is we know steps that can significantly reduce the spread of both illnesses.
- Both COVID-19 and flu are respiratory illnesses caused by different viruses.
 - They have symptoms in common, such as fever and/or chills, cough, sore throat, headache, runny or stuffy nose, fatigue, muscle pain or body aches, vomiting and diarrhea.
 - Some people with COVID-19 report a distinct loss in taste or smell, which isn't typical with flu. Influenza symptoms may also arrive more suddenly, while COVID-19 illness can appear anywhere from 2-14 days after infection.
 - Both illnesses are more likely to lead to severe complications in older people and people with other medical conditions.
 - If you think you might be sick, contact your health care provider to discuss your symptoms and ask if you should be tested for flu or COVID-19.
- COVID-19 spreading at the same time as influenza creates new challenges we haven't experienced during a typical flu season.
 - Influenza viruses begin circulating every year around this time and often peak in January or February. Each year, thousands of people are hospitalized with flu, and some die due to the illness.
 - In Wood County, an average of about 100 people are hospitalized each flu season. The most severe recent flu season was 2017-2018, when 203 people were hospitalized.
 - If hospitalizations increase for one or both illnesses, the risk grows that medical care won't be available for everyone who needs it, and more people could suffer severe illness or death.
- You can help lessen potential strain on our community's health care system this fall and winter by getting a flu shot.
 - Getting a flu vaccine means you're less likely to get sick or spread flu viruses to others.
 - CDC recommends flu shots for anyone 6 months or older.
 - It helps protect your family, friends and people around you, and it means you're less likely to have symptoms that could be mistaken for COVID-19.
 - Fewer people with the flu means hospitals can more easily treat patients with COVID-19 and other illnesses and medical emergencies.
 - Hospitalization from flu is more common in older people, but young people can still become seriously ill.
 - During the 2019-2020 flu season, 12 percent of Wood County hospitalizations were in people under age 18; 14 percent were in ages 36-55; and 44 percent were in ages 65+.

- Each person has a role to play, and it's all of our duty to help reduce COVID-19 cases and keep them low.
 - We're all anxious to get back to the "good old days," and we will, but right now we have to hold fast and keep doing everything we can to keep COVID-19 from causing more illness and death.
 - We can control how COVID-19 spreads, and we are the key to changing how this progresses.
 - It's not only about vaccines, treatments, or rules. It's us. It's each action we take that can either spread or stop the spread of the virus.
 - Wearing masks, maintaining distancing, washing hands often, and staying home if we're sick will all be critical as people spend more time indoors and potentially gather with family and friends over the holidays.
 - Being vigilant about these actions now will help reduce COVID-19 and influenza cases and cause less illness to be spread over the next few months.
 - Start making plans for how you will do the holidays and other celebrations differently.
 - Everyone has to continue to adapt, because we can't do the same things we've always done in the past and expect to beat COVID-19.
 - We can't have large family dinners or holiday parties or even football watch parties. But we can find new ways to connect and enjoy each other's company.
 - People have done a remarkable job when we've been forced to adapt our lives to the challenges of this pandemic.
 - We've learned how quickly we can find new ways of doing things, especially activities from a distance, with a mask or online.
 - Many of us have learned new technology, like virtual meetings and contactless purchasing. Brainstorm ideas to start new traditions with your family, friends and coworkers.