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## MEDIA BULLETIN

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January 09, 2016

For Immediate Release

### **Common respiratory illnesses circulating in the North East, including Chetwynd**

As elsewhere in the province, influenza and other viruses that are common at this time of year are affecting the North East region, including Chetwynd.

A number of children and families are/have been ill with influenza-like symptoms in the Peace region, including Chetwynd. These illnesses are typical for this time of year. Viruses are generally spread easily among children, especially during the peak season, but most children who become ill make a full recovery without any medical help. Seniors and people of any age with underlying medical conditions, especially heart and lung conditions are at a higher risk for severe complications of influenza and other respiratory viruses, such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

“We know that viruses spread more easily among young children, especially during peak season for these illnesses; and we understand the concerns around cases affecting children in the community,” said Dr. Raina Fumerton, Medical Health Officer, Northern Health. “However, we would like to offer assurances that complications and death due to influenza and influenza-like illnesses are rare in children who have no underlying medical conditions. It may happen, but it is rare.”

The best way to reduce your risk of **OR** avoid getting the flu is ongoing prevention. Here are some tips to help protect yourself and your loved ones:

- **Get plenty of rest and fluids if you're sick with influenza-like illness.** Most people will recover on their own at home. Seek medical care if there is trouble breathing, pain in the chest or a high fever that does not get better after 3-4 days.
- **People at high risk of complications who experience influenza-like illness should seek medical care without delay.** Their doctor may want to prescribe a drug that must be given early to be effective.
- **Staying home if you're sick** – You don't want to spread the flu to your classmates, colleagues, or friends. Make sure to rest and get better before returning to work or school.
- **Practicing frequent and proper hand hygiene** – Use alcohol based hand sanitizer regularly and make sure to wash your hands appropriately (wet your hands, scrub with soap for 20 seconds, rinse off your hands, dry your hands thoroughly, and use the paper towel to open and close the door).
- **Observing coughing and sneezing etiquette** – Cough or sneeze into your shoulder, not onto your hand or in the air. Make sure to wash your hands after!
- **Get the flu shot** - Protective effects from the flu shot occur approximately two weeks after receiving it. The BC Centre for Disease Control has noted the main kind of flu found this year is included in this year's vaccine, meaning people will be better protected if they are vaccinated.

- Residents of Chetwynd who wish to arrange a flu shot should call the Chetwynd Primary Care Clinic at 250-788-7300
- Local pharmacists will deliver vaccinations for clients over the age of 5

If you have questions about your illness, please contact your family physician, call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1, or visit [healthlinkbc.ca](http://healthlinkbc.ca). Influenza symptoms can include fever, headache, muscle pain, runny nose, sore throat, extreme tiredness, and cough. Even healthy people can get sick from the flu.

Hundreds of people in B.C. die each year from influenza or complications from influenza, like pneumonia. The very old and the very young, and people of any age with underlying medical conditions, can experience more serious health concerns with influenza. It is not just about protecting yourself from the flu, but also the most vulnerable that you come into close contact with or care for.

Other respiratory viruses, in addition to influenza, are common at this time of year, and have also been picked up. This includes Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) which can also be hard on the very old and the very young and people with underlying medical conditions. More information regarding this infection can be found at <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/hw176517>.

The Chetwynd Primary Care Clinic remains open, but is seeing an increase in visits due to this increase in respiratory illness in the community.

Northern Health reminds the public that a few simple tips can help avoid unnecessary trips to the hospital or health clinic.

Here are a few guidelines for handling your health concerns:

- Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 for confidential health information and non-emergency services 24/7. For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY), call 7-1-1.
- For non-urgent care, use community health services including your family practitioner or walk-in clinics, where available.
- If you have a cold, call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 for advice, or ask your pharmacist about over-the-counter medications to ease symptoms.
- Remember, it's not too late to get a flu shot; check [immunizebc.ca](http://immunizebc.ca) for clinic dates.
- If you are concerned about a possible poisoning or exposure to a toxic substance, call Poison Control at 1-800-567-8911.

If at any time you believe you require urgent medical attention, **do not hesitate** to go to the emergency department or call 9-1-1 for transportation.

While emergency services are available 24/7, hospitals and clinics may experience higher than normal volumes at various times of the year. NH emergency rooms tend to patients who have experienced a sudden and/or unusual change in their health. This includes, but isn't limited to, breathing difficulties, severe bleeding or pain, broken bones, chest pain, overdoses and eye injuries.

We would like to thank the public for their support. For more information on programs and services offered by Northern Health, visit [northernhealth.ca](http://northernhealth.ca).

**Media Contact:** NH media line – 1-877-961-7724