



HealthLine

(A newsletter of the Darke County Health Department)

Message from the Health Commissioner

Dr. Terry Holman, DVM, RS:

Flu Now Widespread Across Ohio;

Influenza-like illness is now widespread throughout Ohio for the first time this flu season, and the number of associated hospitalizations are rising.

In the first week of January, there were 287 new confirmed flu-associated hospitalizations in Ohio compared to 157 the week before. There have been 654 total flu-associated hospitalizations since flu season began last October.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu activity is on the rise across the country and this trend is expected to continue for at least several more weeks.

Flu season in Ohio generally lasts from October to May, with flu-associated hospitalizations typically peaking between December and February. The 2015-16 flu season a year ago started a bit later and flu-associated hospitalizations did not peak until early March. There were 3,691 total flu-associated hospitalizations during last year's flu season in Ohio and an estimated 20,000 deaths across the United States.

Influenza vaccination is the safest and most effective way to prevent the flu, except for infants younger than 6-month old who aren't eligible to receive it. Vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits and missed work and school. The flu vaccine will not give individuals the flu as it contains a killed virus.



While vaccination provides the greatest protection against the flu, other effective ways to avoid getting or spreading it include:

- Washing hands frequently or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Covering coughs and sneezes with tissues, or coughing or sneezing into elbows;
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth;
- Staying home when sick and until fever-free for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.

Symptoms of influenza can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Flu vaccination is available at most healthcare providers' offices, local health departments and retail pharmacies.

More information about influenza and flu activity in Ohio is available at www.flu.ohio.gov.

The flu vaccine is currently available at the Darke County General Health District. Our walk-in clinics are on Tuesdays from 8:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. Or call 937-548-4196 ext. 224 to make an appointment. We accept most insurance, so please bring your insurance card.

*The Health Department is now on Facebook & Twitter.
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Picture of Nicole Lefeld, RN

Staff Highlight:

Nicole Lefeld, is a 2006 graduate of Rhoades State College with an Associate Degree in Nursing. Her primary responsibilities as a public health nurse include Help Me Grow Service Coordinator, providing maternal/ infant home visits, Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH) and working as an immunization nurse. She has been employed with the Health Department since 2008.



February is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women. Every year, 1 in 4 deaths are caused by heart disease.

To prevent heart disease and increase awareness of its effects, the Darke County Health Department is proudly participating in American Heart Month.

You can help make healthy choices to lower your risk of developing heart disease. Controlling and preventing risk factors is also important for people who already have heart disease. To lower your risk:

- Watch your weight.
- Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation.
- Get active and eat healthy.

Follow these tips for heart-healthy eating:

- **Eat less saturated and *trans* fat.** Stay away from fatty meats, fried foods, cakes, and cookies.
- **Cut down on sodium (salt).** Look for the low-sodium or “no salt added” types of canned soups, vegetables, snack foods, and lunch meats.
- **Get More Fiber.** Fiber is in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.

For additional information visit:

www.heart.org/HEARTORG

American Heart Month Sponsor

Free Radon Test Kits Available

The Regional Air Pollution Control Agency, in partnership with the Ohio Department of Health, Union County Health Department, and local Health Departments, is offering free radon test kits for Miami Valley homeowners to check their homes for elevated radon levels.

Radon is a colorless, odorless soil gas that can build up in homes and may pose an increased risk of lung cancer to occupants. The Ohio Department of Health estimates about half of Ohio families live in homes with elevated radon levels. Testing is the only way to know if elevated levels exist in a home. The Darke County Health Department recommends all homes be tested, regardless of age, location, or construction type. Elevated radon levels can be corrected with the installation of a ventilation system to direct the gas outdoors.

Homeowners interested in reducing their family's lung cancer risk can obtain a free test kit by visiting

www.drhomeair.com/OH or

<http://www.rapca.org/programs.org>

More radon information is available by visiting www.epa.gov/radon, or <http://radon.utoledo.edu>



Picture of Radon Test Kit



Brittany Weitzel, SIT

Staff Highlight:

New employee: Brittany Weitzel

The Health Department would like to welcome our newest staff member Brittany Weitzel. Brittany is a graduate of Versailles High School and has a degree in Clinical Laboratory Science from Wright State University. Brittany currently lives in St. Henry with her husband Scott and dog Rosie. Brittany loves watching and being active in sports. She also enjoys spending time with friends and family. Brittany is a Sanitarian-In-Training and she will work mostly in the Sewage Operation and Maintenance Program in the Environmental Division.

Public Swimming Rules Being Revised

Every 5 years the State of Ohio revises the Public Swimming Rules. They are currently in the process of making these revisions. The rules establish the rules of operation, administration, and construction standards for public swimming pools in the State of Ohio. These draft rules along with information on how to comment on the rules is available on the Ohio Department of Health's website at:

<https://www.odh.ohio.gov/rules/drafts/drafts.aspx>. or by calling 614-644-7438.

Comments must be received by February 8, 2017. ODH will review and consider comments received before the rules are submitted for original filing and adoption proceedings.

Grant Money Available for Septic System Repair/Replacement

The Darke County Health Department has been awarded \$300,000 in grant money to help homeowners repair or replace their failing septic systems.

Homeowners may qualify for the grant money if the house is owner-occupied, the house is not for sale, taxes and mortgage payments are up to date, and the total household income is between 100%-300% the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines. These guidelines are based on the number of people living in the home and their combined yearly income.

For more information, please contact Sophie Hurley, RS: 937-548-4196 ext. 208 or sophie.oconnor@darkecountyhealth.org.