

## **Fighting the Flu - Now**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

Shelli Dankoff – Media Relations Program Manager

With fall upon us as temperatures turn colder, now is the time to turn our attention to fighting influenza among our friends, family, and co-workers. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) classifies flu season from October-May and issues weekly surveillance reports nationwide during that period.

Across the United States, we are already seeing pockets of high activity, while Illinois is seeing cases steadily rise, including in children.

“Already this year we've had two pediatric deaths within the United States related to that. Last year we had, through the season, 142 pediatric deaths. So, really, that is something that we know by the efforts of vaccinations this is something that can be preventable,” said Dana Deshon, APN, OSF HealthCare.

Dana Deshon is an advanced practice nurse who cares for children. She says while children with compromised immune systems, or those with chronic conditions, are among those most at risk of being hospitalized because of the flu, that's not always the case.

“Children who are dying are otherwise healthy children, so they have very robust immune systems. But what happens is that that influenza can go in and it can attack the heart, it can attack the lungs and can actually go into the brain. And it can happen very quickly and so by the time that you realize that what it is sometimes those kids are very, very sick.”

A 2017 CDC study found vaccination significantly reduced a child's risk of dying from influenza. The study, which looked at data from four flu seasons between 2010 and 2014, found that flu vaccination reduced the risk of flu-associated death by nearly two-thirds (65 percent) among healthy children.

Signs of flu can mimic a cold – runny nose, coughing, body aches, fever. Deshon says the biggest difference is that a child can get sick very quickly and feel terrible.

The best way to prevent getting the flu, or significantly reduce its effects, is to get an annual influenza vaccination, recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older.

Learn more about the symptoms and treatments for the flu [here](#).