

The Fight Against the Flu is Still On

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

Shelli Dankoff – Media Relations Coordinator

While this year's flu season is bad, it's not the worst. According to the Centers for Disease Control, influenza kills between upwards of 56,000 people each year, especially in really bad years like this one, and can send more than 700,000 people to the hospital. 63 children have already died from influenza this season.

Flu remains widespread across the country. Part of the problem is the lack of effectiveness of this year's influenza vaccine. Estimates are it's only 10-30% effective on this year's H3N2 strain. The other problem is that flu outbreaks typically happen in little pockets throughout the country, not all at the same time. This year it happened early and was widespread, taxing resources for treatment.

SOT Dr. Kurt Bloomstrand – Emergency Medicine Physician, OSF HealthCare

(2009 was bad as well with H1N1 but this one is very bad again because it was so widespread it really put a strain of all resources and only with getting low on immunizations but also getting all of the treatment for influenza which is Tamiflu... because everywhere across the country needed it at the same time so this year is bad :18)

Dr. Kurt Bloomstrand is an emergency medicine physician. He says typically the very young and old and those with chronic health conditions are usually those most at risk for get critically ill and dying from the flu. He says this year there's been a significant uptick in the number of baby boomers – those in their 50s and 60s who are being hit harder than normal, most likely because of the strain of the virus this year – one they haven't seen in their lifetime with a chance to build up immunity to it.

The number of younger, otherwise healthy people who are dying – including children, teenagers and even 20 and 30-somethings, is also causing concern. Dr. Bloomstrand says they often don't seek treatment right away and are dying from secondary complications like pneumonia. These additional respiratory problems can overwhelm your heart and lungs and lead to death.

SOT Dr. Kurt Bloomstrand – Emergency Medicine Physician, OSF HealthCare

(In the younger populations are more apt to not come in right away if they have influenza they'll stay in the bed to drink fluids, Tylenol/ibuprofen. We're seeing this year it's not working you need to be seen by your primary care physician or to the emergency department if you have signs or symptoms of influenza because again the strain we're seeing this year seems to be more serious than in years past. :24)

Dr. Bloomstrand adds if you have signs of influenza – fever, chills, headache, sore throat, body aches, you need to be seen by a doctor early on. He says some people are even getting sick a second time because there are different flu strains circulating. Dr. Bloomstrand says we have many more weeks of the flu season left and urges those who haven't to get vaccinated.

SOT Dr. Kurt Bloomstrand – Emergency Medicine Physician, OSF HealthCare

(People are still dying, we're seeing younger patients die more so than we ever have before this year. If you have not got a vaccine please go get a vaccine. It takes two weeks for your body to build your immune system to it so the sooner you can get it the better it's not too late you still need to get an immunization to influenza. :16)

Learn more about influenza [here](#).