

January 20, 2015

Influenza-like Illness: An Update for Parents

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has indicated that influenza is widespread at this time of year. While a shift in the strain of flu this year has resulted in more vaccinated people than usual developing flu, vaccination still has been shown to lessen the risk for serious illness and hospitalization should one develop the flu. Each year otherwise healthy children who are not vaccinated die from influenza, over 50 in fact this year already. Very young children and those with chronic illness are at highest risk. Vaccinating others who care for vulnerable children can lessen the risk of illness. Of importance, especially in the very young, the very old, and people with chronic medical conditions, if the flu strikes it is best to check with your health care provider early to assess whether anti-viral medications will be useful to reduce the risk of severe complications from the flu.

This is also to remind you of the continued availability of the 2014-2015 influenza vaccine that you can get through your health care provider or at flu clinics and pharmacies this year. As you are aware, influenza remains an annual illness that is generally preventable by yearly vaccination. One year's vaccine does not give lasting protection for the coming year's flu viruses.

Flu season generally runs between November and May each year, but most cases of flu illness occur in January, February, and less so March. It takes about 2 weeks to develop protection following the flu vaccine. The recommendation from the CDC is that all people who do not have allergies to components of the vaccine get the vaccine early in the fall when it becomes available, but if you missed it then, please consider it now.

The BOCES wants to encourage you also to have plans in place should you have need for extended childcare in the event your child is ill and cannot attend school. As always, please remind your children of the importance of frequent and good hand washing, good respiratory hygiene to cover coughs and sneezes and prompt disposal of used tissues, and of not sharing personal items with others. Please keep ill children home from school until they are well enough to attend a full day of school without fever reducing medicines, and do remember to call in your child's absence with the reason for absence. Thank you for your cooperation and stay healthy!