



Flu hits Riverbend region hard in early January

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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**Protect
your
patients,
coworkers,
family and
friends.**



EMPLOYEES

BJC HealthCare

Please stay home if you have any flu symptoms

**Fever - Chills
Cough - Sore Throat
Headache - Body Aches**

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They are deemed to be accurate, but not warranted as such in any way.*

ALTON - The flu has hit the Alton area in rampant fashion with hospitals being filled with flu patients in recent days.

Alton Memorial Hospital, Saint Anthony's Health Center and Jersey Community Hospital all report many cases so far this winter of influenza.

Alton Memorial Hospital Director of Business Development Rusty Ingram said it is safe to say the flu has hit harder and earlier this year.

These are statistics that Ingram provided comparing 2017 with 2016:

For 2017, AMH Ingram said the following:

1 positive Influenza A case in October

74 positive Influenza A cases in November

300 positive Influenza A and 6 Influenza B cases in December and the first week of January – 13 positive Influenza A cases and 1 Influenza B case

“In 2016, we did not see our first case of Influenza until mid-November and it was B,” Ingram said. “In December 16, we only saw 4 cases until after Christmas Eve – then we saw 29 cases, 10-A and 19-B. Our biggest numbers were in January (173 cases), February (167 cases) and March (26 cases). After that we only saw 8 cases in April and none in May. These are only cases seen in our Emergency Room and don't include the cases seen in our physician offices or at Convenient Care.”

Rita Haynes, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center Infection Control Coordinator.

When asked about positive flu cases at SAHS by the first week of January, Rita Haynes, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center Infection Control Coordinator, said: “We have seen 153 positive flu cases majority of which have been seen in ED and Outpatient Lab. A total of 145 patients were tested positive for the influenza A and 8 patients were tested positive for the Influenza B. Twenty-five patients were admitted to the hospital for Positive Influenza.

Haynes said the two previous flu seasons were mild with most being outpatient and at this time last year the health center had only seen 15 patients with positive influenza and for the entire season last year we had 178 positive flu cases.

Haynes reminded people that the CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against the flu viruses.

“The flu vaccine can reduce flu illnesses and prevent flu-related hospitalizations,” she said. “Also, try to avoid close contact with sick people. While sick limit contact with others as much as possible. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Wash your hands often with soap and water.

“If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu. Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.

“Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.”

Julie Smith, chief nurse at Jersey Community Hospital as well as the Infection Prevention coordinator, said: “When we have any flu activity, we make sure to watch closely the spread (ages, where people live, same school/workplace) and We ask those patients to mask immediately b/c they are the contagious when they cough, sneeze, sniffle. Then once we get to a certain level we put our employees on masking with any pt that has flu/respiratory symptoms.

“We re-instruct all of our employees on the importance of hand hygiene and keeping their hands away from their faces. I personally instruct visitors as they come thru the door about the hand-washing and masking. Recently, IDPH put out a bulletin with flu guidance for hospitals and facilities. We implemented our flu visitor restrictions the Thursday before Christmas.

“We try to place flu patients in private rooms but this year we have had to place flu patients together because we have had so many. We put a ban on kids under 18 because they are truly most susceptible and since they are in crowds and they do not have best hand hygiene practices, we take that situation out of play.”