

# KCDC Issues Influenza Epidemic Alert [Nov.16]

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- ◇ KCDC issued influenza epidemic alert on Friday Nov. 16, 2018
- ◇ General public advised to receive vaccinations and those experiencing influenza-like illnesses urged to seek treatment
- ◇ Washing hands and covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing are important steps to prevent additional spread of infection

- The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) issued an influenza epidemic alert on Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup> in response to the number of patients with influenza-like illnesses\* in the 45<sup>th</sup> week of 2018 (Nov. 4–Nov. 10) surpassing the epidemic risk threshold\*\*. KCDC advises all individuals to maintain proper hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing and cough etiquette.

\* Influenza-like illnesses: those with a fever of 38°C or higher and cough or sore throat

\*\* 2018–2019 seasonal influenza epidemic risk threshold: 6.3 persons/1,000 population (2017–2018 season: 6.6 persons/1,000 population)

Number of persons per 1,000 population with influenza-like illnesses in 2018: 4.9 in 43<sup>rd</sup> week (Oct. 21–Oct. 27); 5.7 in 44<sup>th</sup> week (Oct. 28–Nov. 3); 7.8 in 45<sup>th</sup> week (Nov. 4–Nov. 10), a value higher than the threshold of 6.3, prompting an influenza epidemic alert two weeks earlier than last year (Dec.1, 2017)

- To prevent additional spread of influenza infection, KCDC urges any individuals who have not yet received their vaccinations to do so as soon as possible.

\* Flu vaccination coverage: 66.9% in children 6 months–12 years of age , 82.7% in adults 65 years or older

- Local governments are asked to notify their communities that free vaccinations for the elderly will continue to be administered at community health centers after Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup>.

- Unvaccinated children aged 6 months–12 years are advised to get vaccinated within the month of November.
- All other high risk populations, including pregnant women, and healthy individuals of all ages are also advised to receive vaccinations.
- While the influenza epidemic alert is in effect, health insurance covers antiviral treatment expenses for high-risk populations, even without prior testing. As such, individuals who experience influenza-like symptoms (fever of 38°C or higher and cough or sore throat) are urged to seek medical treatment as soon as possible at their nearest healthcare facility.
- KCDC also requests cooperation in strengthening influenza prevention measures in childcare centers, schools, and nursing homes.
- To prevent the spread of influenza among young children and students, those infected are asked to refrain from attending childcare centers, schools, or other academic facilities until the following conditions are met:
  - Five days have passed since the onset of symptoms
  - An absence of fever for at least 48 hours without the use of medication
- To prevent the spread of influenza among the elderly, staff and personnel working at nursing homes and similar facilities are advised to receive vaccinations and to take the following measures:
  - Strengthen monitoring of influenza symptoms
  - Restrict visitations from those who have respiratory symptoms
  - Separate individuals who exhibit influenza-like symptoms
- KCDC urges the public to follow proper personal hygiene measures, such as frequent hand washing and cough etiquette, to help protect themselves from influenza infection.

## ◀ Personal Hygiene Guidelines ▶

### ◇ Wash hands frequently

- Wash hands with under running water with soap for at least 30 seconds, especially after going outdoors, sneezing, coughing, blowing your nose, using the restroom, before and after eating, and before and after changing diapers

### ◇ Follow cough etiquette

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeves when coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands after coughing
- Wear a mask if you have a severe cough
- Properly dispose of any used tissues or masks

### ◇ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands