Lone Star College urges being prepared for flu season during the COVID-19 pandemic

HOUSTON (Sept. 15, 2020) – The Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are reporting that reducing the spread of respiratory illnesses this fall and winter is more important than ever. As the flu season begins, many health officials worry about the combination of influenza and COVID-19.

“Influenza commonly known as the flu and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses,” said Christina Hagerty, Ed.D., LSC-CyFair dean, Public Service, Health & Behavioral Sciences. “Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it may be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. One should visit a healthcare provider to confirm a diagnosis.”

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS), the official flu reporting season begins in October and continues through May. In Texas, influenza activity usually peaks in January or February. Since it takes about two weeks for immunity to develop after receiving the flu vaccine, TDSHS recommends getting flu vaccines before the end of October.
“Getting a flu vaccine alone will not protect you against COVID-19, but there are still many important benefits to getting one,” says Hagerty. “Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of the flu illness, hospitalization, and death. Plus, getting a flu vaccine will conserve healthcare resources for the care of patients with COVID-19.”

Children under 6 months of age are not recommended to be immunized for the flu shot. In addition, those who have life-threatening allergies to the flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine should not receive a flu vaccination. Those concerned should speak with their family physician or healthcare provider to share any apprehensions before receiving the flu vaccine.

“While everyone is susceptible to catching the flu, certain groups of people have a higher risk of getting really sick,” said Hagerty. “Chronic health problems and weakened immune systems make people more vulnerable to complications from the flu.”

According to the CDC, children under age two are at greatest risk, but all children under age five are at increased risk. Adults age 65, pregnant women and people with any chronic illness such as heart, lung, or kidney disease are also at a greater risk.

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