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# 2018 Flu Epidemic May Be Worst on Record

FEBRUARY 19TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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The nationwide flu outbreak could be the worst on record, federal health officials said today while releasing a grim report that at least 63 children have died from influenza.

The flu is a virus, and there are three different strains circulating this year. The flu vaccine is meant to fight against H3N2, H1N1 and influenza B.

CDC officials aren't exactly sure why this season has been so rough, but most of the country has been hit by the flu at the same time, which officials said was unusual.

The predominant virus this year has been H3N2, which means there have been more complications among the young and elderly. The flu vaccine isn't as effective against this strain as it is for the others.

Flu season began in October; the average duration is 16 weeks, but it can last up to 20 weeks.

As the nation continues to battle one of the worst flu seasons in years, some people may be wondering if they should still get a flu vaccine, especially this late in the season, and with reports that the vaccine may be even less effective than experts previously estimated.

Is it too late to get a flu shot? No, it is not too late. Though experts suggest getting a flu shot in October, the flu season can last all the way into May. So health officials are continuing to urge people to get vaccinated if they haven't already.

Does the flu shot work right away? No, unfortunately, the effects are not immediate. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it takes roughly two weeks after being vaccinated for your body to create antibodies and provide protection against the flu.

How do I know if I have the flu? The flu is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can be mild, or it can be severe, and can even lead to death.

According to the CDC, symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever, or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches

Fatigue (tiredness)

Some may experience vomiting and diarrhea. However, the CDC says this is more common among children than adults.

What are the best medicines to treat the flu? There are plenty of medicines to treat the flu, called antivirals, which quicken recovery and prevent potentially serious complications.

According to the CDC, the best FDA-approved antiviral medicines this season include:

Oseltamivir (Tamiflu)

Zanamivir (Relenza)

Peramivir (Rapivab)

CDC officials also said to make sure people wash their hands, stay home if they're sick and to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze.

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