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TO: DeKalb County News Media
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Take sensible steps to protect your family from respiratory illness

With respiratory illness reports in many parts of the nation and Illinois, alongside the upcoming cold and flu season, the DeKalb County Health Department is recommending increased awareness and actions to help control and prevent the spread of illness, to keep our residents and community healthy.

As recently reported by the Illinois Department of Public Health, enterovirus D68 (EV-D68) causes respiratory illness, and the virus can be found in respiratory secretions such as saliva, nasal mucus, or sputum. There are more than 100 types of enteroviruses that cause respiratory illnesses. EV-D68 is considered a less common form of enterovirus. The virus likely spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or touches contaminated surfaces. Infants, persons with chronic respiratory conditions such as asthma, and persons with immune system suppression are at greater risk of complications and should seek medical care early when they first develop symptoms.

Many infections are mild and resolve on their own, requiring only treatment of the symptoms. Specific symptoms include fever, difficulty breathing, and wheezing or asthma exacerbation. Some people with severe respiratory illness caused by EV-D68 may need to be hospitalized and receive supportive therapy. Like many viral illnesses, there is no specific treatment or vaccine for EV-D68 infections. No antiviral medications are currently identified for treating of EV-D68 infections.

You can help protect yourself and your family from respiratory illnesses by following these steps:

- If you or a family member are experiencing cold-like symptoms with wheezing or difficulty breathing, contact your health care provider immediately to arrange for appropriate care.
- To prevent spread of respiratory illness due to enterovirus, influenza, and other infections in the school and work settings, we recommend that ill persons stay home if experiencing respiratory illness symptoms (such as fever, cough, sore throat, and wheezing).
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs and toys, especially if someone is sick.
- To protect against influenza, get yourself and your family vaccinated against seasonal flu. Vaccination is recommended yearly for everyone 6 months and older.

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