

NEWS RELEASE**For Immediate Release** | December 20, 2017Media Contact | [Chris J. Minnick](#)

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Flu Widespread with Highest Number of Seasonal Cases Ever Reported by December
ADHS Public Health Officials Encourage Everyone to Get Vaccinated

PHOENIX – Flu is widespread in Arizona with 2,629 more cases reported than this time last year, the Arizona Department of Health Services announced today. As of Dec. 20, there have been 2,976 cases of flu reported compared to 347 for the same time period in 2016, which is a 758 percent increase in flu activity.

This is the highest number of seasonal cases this early since influenza tests became reportable. During the past two seasons, Arizona did not reach widespread activity until February.

“Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect yourself and your family against the flu, and with the disease spreading quickly in Arizona the time to get vaccinated is now,” said Dr. Cara Christ, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. “It can take up to two weeks to build full immunity to the flu after you are vaccinated, so I encourage everyone who has not yet had a flu shot to get one today before the holidays.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months [receive the influenza vaccine](#) each season. This is particularly important for those at [risk for complications](#), such as adults aged 65 years and older, people with asthma and diabetes, and pregnant women. People can find a place to get vaccinated at [vaccinefinder.org](#).

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness and can lead to hospitalization and death. The flu virus spreads when someone with influenza coughs, sneezes, or talks. You can also catch influenza by touching a surface or object that the virus lands on and then touching your face.

Even if you are vaccinated, there are more ways to prevent the spread of influenza:

- Wash your hands
- Cover your cough
- Stay home when you are sick
- Avoid touching your face

For more questions about the flu vaccine, contact the ADHS Immunization Program Office at (602) 364-3630 or your [county health department](#). You can stay up-to-date on influenza activity in Arizona throughout the season by viewing the weekly reports on the ADHS website at [azhealth.gov/flu](#), or by subscribing to receive the influenza report via email at [azhealth.gov/email](#).

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Health and Wellness for all Arizonans