News Release

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For Immediate Release
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Respiratory Illness Preparedness

Plattsburgh, February 27, 2020. As concerns over a novel (new) respiratory illness grow, Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) wants to remind residents that we’ve been practicing for this for years. Not just the Health Department but all of us! We cover our coughs. We wash our hands and stay home when we’re sick. Don’t we?

Messages about standard measures to stop the spread of infection are repeated by CCHD and other public health professionals around the state, the nation, and around the world as the flu season begins and throughout the year. “Sometimes we feel like a broken record,” states Karen Derusha, Supervising Public Health Educator and spokesperson for the department. “Hearing the same message over and over again may get tedious but these simple steps save lives.” Prevention measures for the new (novel) coronavirus, known as COVID-19 are the same as measures used to prevent the spread of flu. At this time, it is still more likely that an individual in the United States will contract flu than become ill with COVID-19.

Local public health partners have been preparing in other ways too. Health departments have Emergency Preparedness Plans that are reviewed and updated routinely. There are Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs) that outline when certain day-to-day operations may be suspended, allowing more staff to focus on monitoring and prevention steps. Other organizations, businesses and schools throughout our community have COOPs as well.

Since December, CCHD has been monitoring information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health. Information has been shared with health care providers, and between border patrol, emergency service providers and others. Organizations that are part of the Clinton County Multi-Agency Coordination (CCMAC) group, which meets monthly, have begun reviewing their own plans, as have school districts and other entities. “Systems developed during previous outbreaks such as SARS, MERS, H1N1 and Ebola have helped to prepare us,” states Ms. Derusha. In the meantime, she reminds residents to take these precautions to protect themselves from contracting any respiratory illness.

- Wash your hands often. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces that may harbor germs.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who is ill.

Take these steps to protect others.
- Cover your cough.
- Sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue away.

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• Stay home when you are ill.
• Do not return to work, school or attend social activities until your fever is gone for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medicines.

Ms. Derusha also notes that “COVID-19 is a new virus. The public health community is working hard to learn all it can about this virus to keep people safe.” That may include asking people to avoid close contact with others. She notes that today is a good day to check your own preparedness plan. Visit https://www.ready.gov/pandemic for tips. “If you had to stay home, would you have sufficient food, water and medication on hand? Generally we advise a 3-10 day supply. That’s a good place to start.”


About the Clinton County Health Department:

The Health Department is an accredited full service department serving the residents of Clinton County. The Health Department’s Mission is to improve and protect the health, well-being and environment of the people of Clinton County. Visit our website at www.clintonhealth.org or connect with us on Facebook (@clintonhealth), Twitter (@ClintonCountyHD), and Instagram (clintoncountyhealth).

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