



# Cochise Health & Social Services

Mary Gomez, Director

"Building A Healthier Future"

\*\*\* MEDIA RELEASE \*\*\*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Local Seasonal Flu Impact Minimal – So Far**

The flu has had minimal impact on Cochise County so far in the 2013-14 season. The Arizona Department of Health Services reports that through the week ending 1/4/14, there were 21 laboratory-confirmed cases of flu in Cochise County, up from 16 cases the previous week. By way of comparison, at this point in the unusually early 2012-13 season, there were 102 laboratory-confirmed cases; at this point in the 2011-12 season, only a single confirmed case had been reported.

Contrary to twenty-five other states that have experienced widespread incidence of infections, flu incidence throughout Arizona is still classified as minimal to local. Cochise Health and Social Services is receiving reports of four to five new cases weekly. There have been a few hospitalizations, but no flu-related deaths have been recorded in the county.

It is significant to note the number of actual flu illnesses is likely quite higher than the reported laboratory-confirmed number because many people with the flu do not seek medical attention, and in many cases samples are not sent to labs for confirmation. Cochise Health and Social Services is actively collaborating with the Arizona Department of Health Services in investigation and control efforts.

The strain of flu virus that is most prevalent this year is called H1N1, which was the predominant strain in the 2008-09 season. This strain is somewhat unusual because it tends to cause more illness in children and young adults than other flu strains, although all age groups are affected. The good news is that H1N1 and other prevalent strains circulating in the United States are covered by this year's vaccine formula, which makes it even more important to obtain the vaccine.

**Recommendations for the Public**

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report 381,000 people were hospitalized in the U.S. with flu last season. The virus kills between 3,000 and 49,000 people in the U.S. each year depending on the severity of the annual outbreak. The CDC says the flu vaccine kept 79,000 Americans out of the hospital last year and prevented 6.6 million cases of flu. Despite the vaccine's efficacy, fewer than half of Americans have been vaccinated this season.

**There is still time to get a flu shot**, which is the single most effective way to protect yourself and those around you against the flu. An annual flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older. Flu shots are often covered by health insurance and can be obtained at many convenient locations (contact your primary care physician for advice).

\*\*\* more \*\*\*

Public Programs, Personal Service: [www.cochise.az.gov](http://www.cochise.az.gov)

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In addition, there are some simple things you can do to help prevent flu and other illnesses in yourself and your family, and to decrease the chances of spreading them to someone else if you do get sick:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before eating, after coughing or sneezing, and after using the toilet. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze. Use disposable tissues and throw them away after use.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick. Anyone who has flu or a flu-like illness should stay home from school, work, or other activities until at least 24 hours after the fever has gone away without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

## For More Information on Arizona and National Statistics

Up-to-date flu information may be obtained from the Arizona Department of Health Services (<http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/oids/epi/flu/index.htm>) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/summary.htm>).

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## About Cochise Health and Social Services

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, Cochise Health and Social Services promotes health and quality of life for all Cochise County residents through education, service, and leadership.

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