FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Williamson County and Cities Health District Flu Update

As of the week ending 1/13/2018, Williamson County is experiencing moderate but increasing influenza (flu) illness as flu season approaches its peak in Texas and nationwide. In any given year, 5-20% of people get the flu. Flu season typically peaks in winter months. The Williamson County and Cities Health District (WCCHD) monitors flu activity through reports of flu tests and counts of patients with flu-like symptoms from hospitals, school districts, and selected clinics throughout the county. Individual cases of flu are not required by law to be reported to the health department, except for outbreaks at facilities and pediatric deaths. WCCHD tracks flu data for trends in location and impact on the community rather than for estimating the total number of cases in the county. WCCHD does not receive death certificates as some other health departments do, and so has no method of reporting deaths in persons diagnosed with flu.

We have not received any reports of pediatric deaths associated with flu this season. WCCHD publishes a detailed flu report every week during flu season on the WCCHD home page at www.wcchd.org:

WCCHD Influenza Update 2017-2018 Season

In the past week, 27.9% of specimens tested for flu were positive. Only 7.3% of patient visits to clinics were for influenza-like illness (ILI) – that is, a fever of at least 101 degrees and a cough or sore throat without another known cause. In contrast, the state percentage was somewhat higher at 8.3%. Additionally, WCCHD has investigated 12 outbreaks of flu – ten at long-term care facilities and two at day care facilities.

Anyone can get the flu. Flu can be a serious illness, especially for older people, young children, pregnant women, and people with other illnesses like diabetes, or kidney, heart, or lung disease. Flu season can last until May, and your public health department recommends taking these steps now to protect yourself and others:

- Get vaccinated! It’s not too late and the vaccine still provides some protection.
- Wash your hands often with warm, soapy water for 30 seconds.
- Stay home if you feel sick. Flu is very contagious.
- Cover your cough by coughing into your arm, not your hands.
- If you’re sick, ask your doctor about antiviral medications that may help speed your recovery.

To contact WCCHD regarding flu, please visit www.wcchd.org or call our Disease Control and Prevention Division at 512-943-3660, or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at: www.cdc.gov/flu

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