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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Health and Safety Tips for Respiratory Illness Season

As the colder weather starts drawing people in their homes, the windows are closed, and the heat is turned on, this creates a perfect setting for viruses that cause respiratory illnesses to spread.

“Respiratory viruses include rhinovirus (the common cold), influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19. These viruses are spread from person to person by coming in contact with fluids like saliva (spit), respiratory droplets (from coughing and sneezing), or mucous from someone who is sick,” stated Brenden Bedard, Director of Community Health Services for the Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health). “These viruses tend to mutate or change making it difficult to destroy, making it possible to get any of these viruses more than once.”

Generally, these viruses can be mild for most people however, for the very young, the very old and those with weak immune systems, or underlying health condition(s), they can cause serious illness.

Daily practicing of good health precautions throughout the year can limit the spread of all respiratory illnesses. Make sure you and your family practice the following:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing/sneezing. This may prevent those around you from getting sick. Use your elbow or shoulder to limit the spray when coughing/sneezing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. It is especially important to wash your hands after you have coughed or sneezed into your hands or blown your nose. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Frequently disinfect shared items, like doorknobs, phones, pens, remotes, etc.

- Talk with your healthcare provider about being vaccinated for flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumonia. For information on vaccinations visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).
- Practice these other health habits for general health all year:
 - Clean and disinfect touched surfaces at home, work, and school.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Engage in regular physical activity. As you are able, work up to 20-30 minutes a day most days of the week.
 - Manage your stress. Read a book, chat with a friend, take a walk, etc.
 - Drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluids.
 - Eat nutritious foods.

For more information on respiratory illnesses visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/index.html>.

To access New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) COVID-19 isolation orders, visit: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/isolation>. Residents should follow the COVID-19 isolation guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html>.

For more information on Health Department programs and services, visit GOHealthNY.org or call your respective health department at:

- Genesee County: 585-344-2580 ext. 5555
- Orleans County: 585-589-3278

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