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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Protecting Yourself this Respiratory Illness Season

As the temperatures drop, people in our community will spend more time indoors, increasing the chance of spreading respiratory illnesses like Influenza (flu), Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and COVID-19. “During the fall and winter season, we typically have more people getting sick,” said Paul Pettit, Public Health Director for the Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health), “For some people – like children, older adults, and those with underlying health conditions – these illnesses can be serious.”

There are simple ways to keep everyone healthy and small actions can make a big difference. When we work together, we protect ourselves and help protect family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

Tips to Stay Healthy

Viruses spread easily and can change over time, so it’s important to practice good habits to limit the spread.

1. Stay away from people who are sick.
2. If you aren’t feeling well, stay home.
3. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
4. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use hand sanitizer if you can’t use soap.
5. Try not to touch your eyes, mouth, or nose.
6. Talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated and staying up-to-date on vaccinations.
7. Practice other healthy habits:
 - Clean surfaces you often touch at home, school, or work.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Eat healthy meals.
 - Stay active.

What to Do if You Become Sick

If you have symptoms of an illness, like coughing, a sore throat, trouble breathing, or a fever, it is important to act quickly to help yourself and protect others.

1. Stay home and avoid contact with others to avoid the spread of illness.
2. Watch your symptoms closely.
3. Seek medical advice if symptoms get worse or if you have underlying health conditions that make you more at risk.
4. Drink lots of water.

If you have a respiratory illness, like the flu or COVID-19, you can spread it to others. How long you are contagious can vary based on how sick you are and how long you stay sick, which may be different from person to person. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that once your symptoms are better and you haven't had a fever for 24 hours (without using fever medicine), you are usually less contagious. To be extra careful, wear a mask for 5 or more days after your symptoms improve. The CDC offers Respiratory Virus Guidance and continues to monitor health trends and update recommendations as needed. You can get information about the CDC Respiratory Virus Guidance Update here: [Respiratory Virus Guidance Update](#) [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Respiratory Disease Data

For the Genesee and Orleans Counties Respiratory Illness Dashboard that tracks confirmed cases of flu, RSV, and COVID-19, visit: [GO Health Respiratory Dashboard](#). It is important to note the data on this page only includes reported cases. Residents can also access our [GO Health Water Analysis Dashboard](#) to see if there has been an increase in respiratory illness activity in their town/village.

For more information on Health Department programs and services, visit [GOHealthNY.org](#) or call your local health department at:

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

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