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Flu is now widespread across the state
*Delaware County Senior Medical Advisor alerts residents
to significant rise in flu activity across Pennsylvania*

While the peak of the flu season typically comes in February, the disease is getting an early start this year as a result of the recent cold weather that is present across much of the United States.

Dr. George Avetian, Delaware County's Senior Medical Advisor, provided an update during the January 10 weekly council meeting, noting that state officials are reporting "widespread" flu, with flu-related emergency room visits elevated in all regions of the state including Delaware County.

Dr. Avetian urges all residents to get a flu shot if they haven't done so already. He said the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is also recommending the early use of anti-viral medication, such as Tamiflu, to reduce the severity and duration of the illness.

The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone over the age of 6 months. But the vaccine is especially important for the elderly, pregnant women, and people with chronic health conditions that place them at increased risk of complications from the flu.

Now that the flu season is here, in addition to getting vaccinated, everyone should take common sense precautions to keep it from spreading to others. These include:

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay at home when ill.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Alcohol based hand sanitizers can also be used.
- Clean and disinfect high use surfaces, especially if someone has been coughing or sneezing in the area. Disinfect the phone and computer keyboard.

For more information on seasonal influenza, contact your local health care provider or visit www.health.state.pa.us. People can also visit www.flu.gov for information and educational videos.

Information pertaining to flu shot availability is posted on the County website at www.co.delaware.pa.us. Click on the flu link. People who do not have Internet access can call the Department of Intercommunity Health Coordination at (610) 891-5311 for sites and dates.