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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Respiratory Illness Surge in Cowley County

Influenza A, along with other respiratory illnesses, are surging throughout Cowley County. The Health Department has received numerous reports from local health care providers of patients taking ill and experiencing high fever and severe upper respiratory distress. Additionally, schools have also been reporting cases of influenza A in the student population. To complicate matters, there have been numerous co-infections reported including an infant testing positive for RSV and COVID and another child testing positive for influenza A and COVID.

Thomas Langer, the Cowley County Public Health Officer, states, "I know that people are tired of hearing about illness, but the situation is serious. What is happening currently is exactly what we were worried about a couple months ago. Namely, that these different illnesses, flu, RSV and COVID would manifest at the same time."

With Thanksgiving just a few days away, the timing of this illness spike is disappointing and inopportune. Members of the community need to take notice and take measures to protect themselves.

Protect yourself from illness by utilizing the following recommendations:

- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces and countertops.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Avoid sharing utensils or drinks with others.

For influenza A, a flu shot will provide the best protection. Even if you do become infected, flu shots are proven to lessen the severity of symptoms and the length of illness. Flu shots can take up to 2 weeks to provide you with needed protection, so the best time to get one is now. Contact the Health Department or a local pharmacy to schedule an appointment as soon as possible.

If you do become ill, we highly recommend doing the following:

- Seek medical care from your healthcare provider if your symptoms are severe.
- Get tested to determine which illness you may have.
- Stay home and recover fully before you return to your normal activities.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. If you need to leave your home, wear a mask to help protect others.
- Use over-the-counter medicines to help manage symptoms.

With the current surge in respiratory illness and the holidays approaching, we advise everyone to take all the necessary precautions to protect themselves and others.

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