ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

County Sees Spike In New Flu Cases

Director of Health: "Nothing like last year locally, but widespread in New York"

While the number of confirmed cases of influenza in Oneida County is small compared to last year's, there has been a spike locally during the holiday period and flu remains widespread throughout the State, health department officials said today.

"There have been 95 new cases of flu reported in just the past few days, bringing the total number of cases to date to 134 in Oneida County," Phyllis D. Ellis, Director of Health said. She added, *"On this date last year there were more than 1500 confirmed cases of the flu in Oneida County."*

Ellis attributes the sharp increase in recent days due in part to the holidays, with many people visiting and attending large gatherings. *"Whenever people get together in large groups, with some coming from other parts of the country, the chance of spreading the flu virus increases," Ellis* said.

Health department officials remind everyone that it's not too late to get the flu vaccine which offers your best protection from the virus. The flu season usually peaks around mid-February. It takes two weeks to develop immunity after getting the vaccine which is recommended for everyone over 6-month of age. Vaccine is available at many area retail pharmacies and through the Oneida County Health Department clinics in Utica and Rome. 'Walk-in' clinics are held at 406 Elizabeth Street in Utica on Mondays and Thursdays from 1:00 – 3:30 pm and at 300 W. Dominick Street in Rome on Tuesdays from 1:00 – 3:00 pm. No appointments are required.

The New York State Commissioner of Health has declared the flu as "widespread" requiring some healthcare workers who have not been vaccinated to wear a surgical or procedural mask when in contact with patients or those who treat patients.

The Oneida County Health Department urges everyone to help stop the spread of flu by covering all coughs and sneezes with the bend of your arm – not your hands; washing your hands frequently with warm water and soap and when soap and water is unavailable using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; and staying home from work or school if you have flu-like illness including a fever and respiratory symptoms.

For more information visit our website at www.ocgov.net/oneida/health.

"PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF ONEIDA COUNTY"