



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

Department of Governmental Communications

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County Department of Community Health and the Environment Issues 2003-2004 Influenza Report

Season started sooner than usual and affected children most

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, May 03, 2004

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St. Charles County — The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment reported 1,211 confirmed cases of influenza during the 2003-2004 flu season. 58 percent of the reported cases occurred in children under the age of 18. 413 of these cases occurred in children 5 years of age and younger. The cases occurred between October 28, 2003 and February 26, 2004 as were reported by area physicians, hospitals and urgent care centers. The peak of the influenza outbreak in St. Charles County occurred from December 10 – 18, 2003.

Both nationally and on a local level, the 2003-2004 influenza season occurred earlier than past influenza seasons and mostly affected children under the age of 18. A lower number of reported cases occurring in adults could be because adults who are typically healthy are less likely to seek medical care when experiencing symptoms, therefore their cases of influenza are less likely to be documented and included in the report.

“We hope that the increased public awareness generated by the 2003-2004 numbers will convince a lot of people that influenza is unpredictable, can be very serious and sometimes deadly. Hopefully this realization will lead to more St. Charles County residents seeking an annual flu shot,” stated Gil Copley, St. Charles County’s Director of Community Health and the Environment.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the federal government will stockpile flu shots and will target them toward children to avoid the vaccine shortages that caught health officials off-guard this past winter. About 4 million doses of influenza vaccine will be set aside for children up to 18 years old. The government plans to spend \$80 million over the next two years to pay for the stockpile. Adults may be allowed to tap into the children-only supply during a crisis, if approved by Congress.

The complete 2003-2004 St. Charles County Influenza Report is available online in PDF and Word format at www.scchealth.org or by contacting the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment at 636-949-7400.