



**KANAWHA-CHARLESTON  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
108 Lee Street, East /P.O. Box 927  
Charleston, WV 25323-0927  
(304) 344-KCHD (5243)  
kchdvw.org



## **NEWS RELEASE**

November 14, 2022

Contact: Lalena Price, Public Information Officer  
(304) 382-4949; lalena.d.price@wv.gov

### **Kanawha-Charleston Health Officer, Hospital Officers To Give Update On Flu/COVID Today**

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA – Dr. Steven Eshenaur, Health Officer of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, was joined by two local hospital administrators today to discuss rates of serious respiratory illnesses surging in the region just as families are preparing to gather for the Thanksgiving holiday.

“In this life, we have wants and needs,” Eshenaur said. “If you want to stay out of the hospital, you need to get your flu shot.”

Eshenaur stressed that vaccines need 10 to 14 days before the body has enough immunity to fight off infection. “Even if you’re cutting it close to Thanksgiving like this, it’s still better to get vaccinated now rather than later. Some protection is better than no protection,” Eshenaur said during a news conference at the health department in downtown Charleston.

The Kanawha Valley is experiencing high rates of infection one month ahead of schedule for flu season. That, combined with low vaccination rates and an alarming rate of RSV for which there is no vaccine. It’s the perfect storm to potentially land people in the hospital for the holidays.

It’s the exact place Dr. Mike Robie hopes people can avoid at the moment. As the associate chief medical officer for Charleston Area Medical Center Health System, he is seeing an early surge of admissions for flu and RSV for people in high-risk groups – seniors, infants and toddlers. He advised parents to take precautions that worked throughout the pandemic – such as frequent hand washing and keeping children home if they are ill. “And, if your children start showing symptoms don’t wait to get them to their pediatrician for a diagnosis,” Robie said.