



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CDPH Confirms First Flu Death of the Season

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today announced that CDPH has received the first report of an influenza-associated fatality in a person under age 65 for the 2015-2016 flu season. The death occurred in Santa Clara County and serves as a somber reminder that influenza can cause serious illness or death.

“As California’s public health officer, I am troubled when the flu turns into loss of life,” Dr. Smith said. “It doesn’t have to. That’s why I urge you to get your flu shot. By getting vaccinated, you can keep yourself healthy and stop the virus from spreading to others.”

Overall influenza activity in California [remains sporadic](#), but Dr. Smith points out that influenza viruses circulate at their peak levels from December through April.

"Now is a good time to be vaccinated before the flu really spreads widely," said Dr. Smith.

Each year, flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands or sometimes tens of thousands of deaths in the United States. To reduce this threat, CDPH recommends the annual flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older, including pregnant women.

Two of this season’s vaccine components, the influenza A (H3N2) and influenza B (Yamagata lineage) strains, have been updated to match the viruses Californians are likely to face during the 2015-2016 flu season.

Flu can cause severe disease across all ages. According to the [California influenza surveillance report](#) recently published, there were 78 influenza-associated deaths reported in persons under 65 years of age in California during the 2014-15 influenza season. Only deaths in persons under age 65 are reported to CDPH and many influenza-associated deaths are unrecognized. Therefore, the actual number of deaths due to influenza was much greater.

Common symptoms of the flu include fever or feeling feverish, a cough and/or sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, chills, fatigue and body aches. Children may also have nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

To stop the spread of flu and other respiratory illnesses, Californians should also:

- Stay home when sick
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue and properly dispose of the used tissue
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Dr. Smith encourages Californians to contact their health care provider, physician office, clinic or pharmacy about obtaining the flu vaccine. Some local health departments may also offer low- or no-cost flu immunizations. For more information about the flu visit the [CDPH influenza web page](#). To find a flu vaccine location near you, visit www.flu.gov.

www.cdph.ca.gov

