
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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H1N1 Detected in Three Recent Deaths

GRAND RAPIDS – Testing has confirmed three recent deaths in people over the age of 50 in Kent County who were suffering from influenza A (H1N1) virus. Two of the individuals also had other known medical complications; we do not have a medical history yet on the third person. There are over 400 reported flu cases in Kent County so far this season, and of those reported, at least 26 people have been hospitalized.

“In two of these cases, we are certain there were additional underlying medical conditions,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “We have seen, in other parts of the state, healthy young adults are becoming extremely ill from H1N1, as well as several deaths.” In late December, the CDC issued an advisory, noting an increase in severe respiratory illness among young and middle-aged adults due to H1N1 this year.

The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone over 6 months of age. The influenza vaccine this year is highly effective protection against the flu, including H1N1. The CDC recently reported that the influenza vaccination prevented approximately 6.6 million illnesses and 79,000 hospitalizations last year. It is critically important that people get a flu shot now. It takes 10 – 14 days after receiving the vaccination for a person to develop immunity. This is why you often hear people wrongly claim that they got the flu from the flu shot. Multiple studies have confirmed that the flu vaccine does not cause influenza. People can, however, become ill from exposure to contagious people during those 10 – 14 days before their immunity develops. Some children ages 6 months to 2 years old may require two doses of vaccine (parents should check with a health care provider for details).

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs. Flu viruses can spread when people with flu cough, sneeze, or even talk. Someone might also get flu by touching a surface or object (like a phone) that has flu virus on it, and then touching their own mouth, eyes, or nose. Signs and symptoms can include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (very tired), vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). If you think you have the flu, try to limit spreading the illness. Do not go to school or work until you recover.

The Kent County Health Department seasonal influenza program provides vaccinations for all individuals six months of age and older. Vaccines start at \$25 for injection, and \$33 for FluMist nasal spray. Children from six months through eighteen years who have no insurance, or who have insurance that doesn't cover vaccines, will pay a sliding scale administration fee of up to \$15. The Health Department can only bill Medicaid and Medicare. Cash, check, MasterCard, Visa, or Discover are accepted. To make an appointment at any of our five clinic locations, call (616) 632-7200. You can also schedule online at www.stickttotheflu.com. Flu information is also available on our information only line at (616) 742-4FLU (358).

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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