



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Fourth Flu-Related Death Reported in Kent County**

GRAND RAPIDS – Testing has confirmed a recently-deceased individual was suffering from the flu. This is the fourth death in someone over the age of 50 in Kent County who was suffering from influenza. The initial test confirms influenza A, but not the strain. (Three earlier cases were H1N1.) In this case, there were additional, known underlying medical conditions. As of January 23, there were 522 reported flu cases in Kent County this season.

“This year, we’ve seen several tragic consequences connected to the flu,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “While three of the four cases had known pre-existing medical conditions, we know that the flu has impacted individuals of all ages and health levels.” Nationally, most of the cases of influenza being reported this year are H1N1, which in some cases leads to pneumonia and other severe respiratory issues.

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. 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.sticktotheflu.com](http://www.sticktotheflu.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](http://www.accesskent.com/health).