



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Fifth Flu-Related Death Reported in Kent County

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Health Department received notification today of a fifth flu-related death: a man from Kent County over the age of 50. The initial test confirms the man was suffering from Influenza A/H1N1, the predominant strain people have been catching this season. The health department has no medical history on the man, so it is unclear if there were any known underlying medical conditions in this case.

“Health care providers report a leveling-off of cases of flu-like illness in recent weeks, but we still need to practice prevention,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “In some years, we see flu season peaks as late as March. If you are suffering from the symptoms, consider seeking help from a health care provider, and stay home until you recover.” Kent County had five known flu-related deaths in the 2009-2010 season, the initial year that the H1N1 strain was circulating. There were no deaths reported in Kent County in 2012-2013.

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 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 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. To make an appointment at any of our five clinic locations, call (616) 632-7200. You can also schedule online at www.sticktototheflu.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.