
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kent County sees second H1N1 fatality

(Grand Rapids, MI) – The Kent County Health Department received word today of a second death associated with novel H1N1 influenza. The deceased is a 33-year-old male who lived in Kent County. There did not appear to be underlying health conditions in this case.

“We express our deepest sympathies to the victim’s family and friends,” said Cathy Raevsky, Administrative Health Officer for KCHD. “This is the second time this month that influenza has caused a fatality, and this illustrates why we need to take the virus seriously. While the vast majority of people who catch the virus will recover fully and without complications, that’s not always the case.”

Each year in the United States, seasonal flu claims the lives of 36,000 people and hospitalizes another 200,000. This is why it’s important to know when to seek medical attention or emergency care.

People more likely to experience complications from the flu and who should talk to a health care provider if they get flu symptoms this season include:

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People 65 and older
- Pregnant women
- People who have cancer, blood disorders, chronic lung disease, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disorders, liver disorders, neurological disorders, neuromuscular disorders, or weakened immune systems

Also, everyone should know the emergency warning signs of flu. These include difficulty breathing, confusion and sudden dizziness, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, and persistent vomiting.

The number one way to avoid the flu is to get vaccinated. As more vaccine becomes available, vaccine will be provided through physicians, pharmacies, and KCHD clinics. Please visit www.sticktototheflu.com or call the Flu Hotline at (616) 742-4FLU (4358) for frequent updates about vaccine availability and, once more vaccine arrives, where you can get H1N1 vaccinations. Currently, a limited amount of vaccine is available from some Kent County health care providers. At this time, vaccination is only being offered to target groups including pregnant women, children 6 months to adults age 24, people with certain chronic health conditions, health care providers and first responders, and those who care for infants under 6 months. Call your doctor’s office to inquire about vaccine availability.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to the whole of 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 the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and the Westside of Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD and our services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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