
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KCHD receives confirmation of death associated with novel H1N1 influenza

(Grand Rapids, MI) – The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) received confirmation late last Friday of a death associated with novel H1N1 influenza. The victim was a 24-year-old female with multiple underlying health conditions.

“First and foremost,” said Cathy Raevsky, Administrative Health Officer for KCHD, “we wish the families and friends of this individual comfort in their time of loss.”

Raevsky pointed out that individuals with certain underlying health conditions are more susceptible to severe illness, and this situation was one in which the victim had multiple factors working against her. Recent deaths, she added, are not a sign that the flu is becoming more severe. To date, Kent County has had three deaths associated with the novel H1N1 influenza.

Each year in the United States, seasonal flu claims the lives of approximately 36,000 people and hospitalizes another 200,000. This is why it’s important to know when to seek medical attention or emergency care. Emergency warning signs of flu include difficulty breathing, confusion and sudden dizziness, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, and persistent vomiting.

Currently, a limited amount of vaccine is available. 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.

“We anticipate that vaccine will be more widely available to anyone who wants to be vaccinated sometime in December,” Raevsky said. “As more vaccine becomes available, physicians, pharmacies, and KCHD clinics will offer it. The goal is to get it off the shelves and into people as quickly as possible. Flu season typically goes through May, so there is plenty of time remaining to seek protection in the form of a flu shot.”

Look for updates on www.sticktototheflu.com or search for “Kent County Health Department” on facebook to get the latest information as it becomes available.

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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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