



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

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NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Niki Forbing-Orr
Public Information Manager
Media line: (208) 334-0668

Number of flu-related deaths in Idaho jumps to 13

Idaho is seeing more influenza-related deaths at this point in the season than in the same timeframe in the previous seven seasons, and public health officials are concerned. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare has received five new reports in one week of Idahoans who died from an influenza-related illness, bringing the season total to 13 deaths.

"Flu is widespread in Idaho and may be especially severe this season," said Randi Pedersen, the state influenza surveillance coordinator. "Unfortunately, this flu season is far from over. Influenza activity typically peaks in Idaho in January or early February. If you haven't yet gotten the vaccine, it is not too late! Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself and your family from this serious illness."

Everyone over six months of age is recommended to get the flu vaccine, unless they have medical reasons to avoid it.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that infects 5 to 20 percent of the population every year. Symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and sometimes a cough and sore throat. The predominant strain currently circulating in Idaho is influenza A(H3), but influenza A(H1N1) and influenza B also have been detected.

Last flu season, 72 people were reported to have died from flu-related illnesses in Idaho, which far exceeded the annual average of 23 deaths

during each season from 2009-2010 through 2015-2016. The first reported influenza-related death last season occurred in December.

Besides getting the flu vaccine, everyday actions to stop the spread of influenza include:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing to prevent infecting other people. Avoid people who appear to be sick.
- Stay home from work or school when you're sick so you don't infect others.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after being out in the public. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth until you have washed your hands.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of liquids, eat nutritious foods and take part in physical activity to stay healthy.

Most people who get influenza recover after a few days, but some people may develop serious complications. Every year, influenza contributes to an estimated 36,000 deaths in the United States, along with more than 200,000 hospitalizations.

If you do become sick with the flu, your doctor may prescribe antiviral drugs to treat the illness. If taken right away at the start of the illness, these drugs can help decrease the severity of illness and shorten the time a you are sick.

Antivirals also can prevent serious flu complications that could land you in the hospital. Complications include, but are not limited to, secondary bacterial infections, serious pneumonia, and even death.

For those who are high-risk for complications from influenza, it is very important to promptly seek medical attention when symptoms start. Those at high risk include children under the age of 5, adults 65 years or older, pregnant women, and those with medical conditions such as asthma, heart or lung diseases, or a weakened immune system.

For more information about influenza, please visit www.cdc.gov/flu or <http://flu.idaho.gov>