



News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH IDENTIFIES FIRST FLU CASES OF THE SEASON

HARTFORD - The Connecticut Department of Public Health advises that the influenza season has officially begun in Connecticut.

"We now have confirmation of two flu cases in Connecticut," according to Commissioner Joxel Garcia, M.D., M.B.A. "Type A influenza was the cause of illness for two Connecticut residents, one from Fairfield County and one from New Haven County. Both of these cases involve young children who became ill in late November," stated Dr. Garcia.

Persons with influenza usually experience a rapid onset of fever, chills, headache, and muscle ache followed by a runny nose, sore throat and cough, which is often severe and lasts for many days. Most persons with influenza recover within two to seven days.

"We have not yet received reports of widespread influenza activity in the state, but we do expect the number of cases to increase over the next several weeks, with some people developing more serious illnesses," according to Dr. Garcia.

Persons at high risk for serious illness from influenza include people aged 50 years or older and people of any age with chronic diseases of the heart, lung or kidneys, diabetes, immunosuppression, or severe forms of anemia. Other groups at risk include residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities housing patients of any age with chronic medical conditions, women who will be more than three months pregnant during the influenza season, and children and teenagers who are

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receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who may therefore be at risk for developing Reye syndrome after an influenza virus infection. Complications such as pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus trouble, and ear infections can occur, especially in those unable to cope because of age or underlying health problems.

Dr. Garcia emphasized that complications from the flu kill more than 20,000 Americans each year and cause more than 100,000 to be hospitalized. Flu shots still provide the best protection available. It is not too late to get a flu shot and the influenza vaccine supply has greatly improved over the past month. This year's flu shot will provide protection against this winter's flu strains. It contains the A/Moscow/10/99 (H3N2)-like, A/New Caledonia/20/99 (H1N1)-like, and B/Sichuan/379/99-like strains of the virus. It takes about 1 to 2 weeks after vaccination for antibody against influenza to develop and provide protection.

For additional information regarding influenza and flu shots, persons should contact their physicians or local health department. Information can also be obtained from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control's website at www.cdc.gov.

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