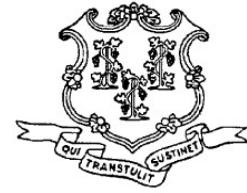


# News



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## **DPH Reports Death of Child with Influenza**

**Hartford** – The Connecticut Department of Public Health (CDC) today announced that a death in a Connecticut child who had influenza was reported to the department last night. This is the first reported death in a child with influenza in Connecticut this year.

“We are saddened to learn of the death of a Connecticut child who had influenza,” stated DPH Commissioner J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H.

Each year, the CDC estimates that 36,000 people in the United States die from complications of influenza, including young people. However, for the vast majority of people including children, influenza is unpleasant, but not serious or life threatening. Flu symptoms can include fever, coughing, sneezing, sore throat and runny nose. Unlike the common cold, the flu tends to strike with sudden severity. High fevers and intense muscle aches are typical flu indicators.

In part because of recent recommendations that healthy young children 6 months – 23 months of age and persons of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions should be vaccinated against influenza, there is intense interest in deaths in children with influenza, and in determining why they died and which children are still at risk for severe illness and death from influenza. For this reason, the CDC has asked state health departments to collect information on such situations and report it to them. Thus far, the CDC has received 42 reports this year, not including the case reported to the Connecticut Department of Public Health.

At this time, it is not certain exactly what role the influenza virus played in the Connecticut child’s death. After several days of milder symptoms, which appeared to get better, the child developed pneumonia and died of respiratory arrest. However, it is not clear whether the pneumonia was due to influenza or due to a second infection with another virus or bacterium. Investigation of all available medical data is being undertaken. The child, an 11 year old, had not been vaccinated against influenza and did have underlying medical problems, although not of the type for which vaccination is routinely recommended.

To minimize the potential for complications, persons with the flu need more rest and more fluids than usual. For adults, aspirin or non-aspirin pain relievers and antipyretics can ease the muscle aches that typically accompany the flu, especially if the patient’s pain and fever is resulting in loss of sleep. Advice for children is the same, except that youngsters under age 18 should not be given aspirin, because of increased risk of getting the potentially deadly Reye Syndrome. Children

should use other medications to reduce fever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. In addition, persons with the flu should avoid using alcohol and tobacco, both of which can contribute to developing second infections.

Persons at special risk from complications of flu should consult their health-care provider when flu symptoms begin. This includes people 65 years or older, people with chronic medical conditions, including children, pregnant women, and babies between six months and 23 months old. Your doctor may choose to use certain antiviral drugs to treat the flu. It is important to get started on this medicine very soon after symptoms begin. Some of these medicines can also be used longer term by high-risk individuals to help prevent flu.

Persons who are having unusually severe flu symptoms, (for example, if you are having trouble breathing), should consult their health-care provider right away. Seek medical treatment, also, in the case of severe dehydration (for instance, if urination has ceased). Consult your health care provider, as well, in instances where a patient's demeanor changes abruptly, such as when a sick child suddenly becomes combative or has been complaining but then becomes overly lethargic.

DPH this week distributed approximately 1050 doses of Aventis adult formulation influenza vaccine from the CDC to local health departments and community health centers. The CDC has advised that available flu shots should be prioritized for those at highest risk: This group includes people age 65 years and older and people of any age with chronic medical conditions. Pregnant women and children between 6 months and 23 months of age also are at increased risk from flu complications.

Even though vaccine supplies are being depleted, as is normal this time of year, enormous numbers of Americans have already gotten a flu shot this year, which means that fewer people are likely to get sick and expose others to flu. Those who cannot get a flu shot and want the flu vaccine may consider the new flu vaccine "nasal spray."

The nasal-spray flu vaccine (sometimes called LAIV for Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine) is a new flu vaccine that was licensed in 2003. It is different from the other licensed influenza vaccine (also called the "flu shot") because it contains weakened live influenza viruses instead of killed viruses and is administered by nasal spray instead of injection.

There still should be adequate supplies of the new nasal spray flu vaccine (FluMist), that can be used for persons 5 years - 49 years of age who have no underlying medical conditions. As many requests for vaccine are from people in these age groups, they still may be able to get vaccinated. They need to contact their regular health care provider to see if they can get vaccinated using the nasal spray vaccine.

Here are additional steps you can take to reduce transmission of flu:

- To help boost your immune system, get plenty of rest, exercise, and eat properly.
- Know the symptoms of flu: Symptoms often resemble those of many upper respiratory infections, but appear much more swiftly and are more severe. A person who has the flu usually has a fever over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, chills, a severe headache and muscle aches as well as a cough and sore throat.
- Stay home from work or school if you experience flu symptoms. Taking it easy could help you feel better sooner and also will slow the spread of disease to others.
- To reduce the spread of germs, cover your nose and mouth, preferably with disposable tissue, when coughing or sneezing. Always discard used tissue properly in the trash.
- Pay attention to hand-washing. After using the bathroom, before eating and before and after preparing food, clean your hands with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. Carry a waterless hand gel and wash your hands frequently.
- Clean surfaces you touch frequently, such as door knobs, water faucets, refrigerator handles and telephones.

Every year, DPH tracks the spread of influenza across the state, identifies the strains of influenza virus causing illness in the state, and provides the public with information about the prevention of influenza. DPH has responded to this year's influenza activity by the creation of an agency-wide response team to monitor influenza activity on a national, regional and local level, to isolate and identify the circulating strains of influenza, to monitor the available influenza vaccine supply, and to coordinate influenza-related communications for the residents of Connecticut.

For more information about influenza, please check DPH's website at [www.dph.state.ct.us](http://www.dph.state.ct.us)

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