



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CDPH Confirms First Flu Death of an Infant this Season

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Public Health (CDPH) State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith today announced that CDPH has received the first report of an influenza-associated fatality in a person under the age of one year for the 2015-2016 flu season. The death occurred in Stanislaus County and serves as another somber reminder that influenza can cause serious illness or death.

“As California’s public health officer, I am saddened when the flu turns into loss of life,” Dr. Smith said. “It is especially troubling when a baby, too young to be vaccinated, passes away. To protect babies who cannot yet be vaccinated, we should get our flu shots. Preventing the spread of this often deadly disease is why getting vaccinated is so important.”

Young children less than a year of age are at increased risk of severe influenza. While children cannot be vaccinated for the flu until they are six months old, there are several ways to protect them. Pregnant women should get vaccinated. This will protect the mother and the newborn baby. Also, anyone who is around a young child or other high-risk person should be vaccinated to reduce the risk of spreading influenza. Overall influenza activity in California [remains sporadic](#), but Dr. Smith points out that influenza viruses circulate at their peak levels from December through April.

"I urge you to be vaccinated now before the flu really spreads widely to protect yourself and those around you," said Dr. Smith.

Each year, flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands or sometimes tens of thousands of deaths in the United States. To reduce this threat, CDPH recommends the annual flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older, including pregnant women.

Two of this season’s vaccine components, the influenza A (H3N2) and influenza B (Yamagata lineage) strains, have been updated to match the viruses Californians are likely to face during the 2015-2016 flu season.

Flu can cause severe disease across all ages. According to the [California influenza surveillance report](#) recently published, there were 78 influenza-associated deaths reported in persons under 65 years of age in California during the 2014-15 influenza season. Only deaths in persons under age 65 are reported to CDPH and many

influenza-associated deaths are unrecognized. Therefore, the actual number of deaths due to influenza was much greater.

Common symptoms of the flu include fever or feeling feverish, a cough and/or sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, chills, fatigue and body aches. Children may also have nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

To stop the spread of flu and other respiratory illnesses, Californians should also:

- Stay home when sick
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue and properly dispose of the used tissue
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Dr. Smith encourages Californians to contact their health care provider, physician office, clinic or pharmacy about obtaining the flu vaccine. Some local health departments may also offer low- or no-cost flu immunizations. For more information about the flu visit the [CDPH influenza web page](#). To find a flu vaccine location near you, visit www.flu.gov.

www.cdph.ca.gov

