



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Public Affairs

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First reported child flu fatality for 2011-12 season

RALEIGH – North Carolina has reported its first child death from flu for the 2011-2012 flu season. A six-year old died on Feb. 4 of complications from an influenza infection. (To protect the family's privacy, the youth's hometown, county and sex are not being released.) The child was at risk for complications from the flu because of underlying medical conditions.

"We extend our deepest sympathy to the family on the loss of their child," said Dr. Laura Gerald, State Health Director. "Unfortunately, this reminds us that flu is a serious illness and can be potentially devastating to people at any age."

Each year, influenza kills an estimated 25,000 people in the US and causes more than 220,000 hospitalizations. Most influenza infections can be prevented by the simple act of getting the flu vaccine. Flu vaccine is readily available and affordable and is the single most effective way to protect yourself and your family.

Flu vaccine is recommended for anyone over 6 months old. It is particularly important for people at high risk of complications, including pregnant women, people with chronic diseases, very young children and the elderly. However, almost half of the children who died from flu last season had no known high risk conditions, so public health officials encourage flu vaccine even for those in good health. This year's vaccine protects against three strains of influenza, including H1N1.

State public health officials monitor the flu activity across the state. Until now, flu activity has been mild but more infections have been detected in recent weeks.

"It is not too late to get your flu shot because flu season can last well into the spring," Gerald said. "If you do get sick, remember to stay home from work or school while you are sick, cover coughs and sneezes, and—most important—wash your hands."

For more information about flu and to find a flu vaccine clinic near you, visit flu.nc.gov.

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Location: 101 Blair Drive • Adams Building • Raleigh, N.C. 27603

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