



FEBRUARY 8, 2007

HEALTH ADVISORY

Minnesota Department of Health Reports Influenza-Related Pediatric Deaths

The Minnesota Department of Health distributed the following health advisory concerning three influenza-related pediatric deaths. The North Dakota Department of Health is forwarding this information to providers and reminding them to encourage their patients to receive influenza vaccinations. North Dakota providers are required to report all influenza cases and all suspected influenza-related pediatric deaths.

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The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has received reports of three deaths in children with influenza who became ill between 1/18/07 and 2/1/07 (including the 8-year-old reported last week). The additional deaths occurred in another 8-year-old and a 17-month old. Laboratory confirmed influenza A (H1) has been confirmed in all three cases, and is a known contributing factor in at least two of the deaths. One of the cases had an underlying health condition not diagnosed prior to the child's death. None of the cases had received influenza vaccine for the current influenza season. Two of the cases resided in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, and one resided in Greater Minnesota.

MDH plans to issue a press release concerning influenza activity in Minnesota, including these deaths, and reiterating that children and others can still benefit from immunization. We hope that this press release will go out no later than Thursday, February 8; however, that timing may change if we begin to receive media inquiries. Please notify MDH if you receive any media calls. Media talking points will be posted on the MDH Workspace.

Pediatric influenza deaths are fortunately uncommon among children. Since pediatric influenza-related deaths became nationally reportable in 2004, a total of 39 and 41 deaths were reported during the 2004-2005 and the 2005-2006 seasons, respectively. In a nationwide study of pediatric influenza-related deaths during the 2003-2004 influenza season, 92 cases ages 2 to 17 years were reported, 64 (70%) of whom had no underlying medical condition. In Minnesota, typically zero to few such deaths are reported annually.

It is unknown at this time whether the cluster of recent deaths in children with influenza H1 represents anything unusual about this influenza season; H1 influenza viruses are not typically associated with severe disease. Nationally, 10 other (or 13 total) influenza-related pediatric deaths have been reported to date during the current influenza season, and influenza activity is considered to be mild to moderate. In Minnesota, influenza activity has been moderate but widespread in recent weeks, with pockets of severe illness. MDH has received reports of 224

influenza outbreaks in schools this season; 190 (85%) were reported within the past three weeks. By comparison, 199 school influenza outbreaks were reported during the entire 2005-2006 season.

MDH continues to recommend influenza vaccine, and the vaccine supply is good. The influenza virus circulating during the current season is well matched to this year's influenza vaccine.

Please contact the NDDoH Division of Disease Control at 701.328.2378 or toll-free at 800.472.2180 with any questions or concerns regarding this issue.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, North Dakota EMS Association and hospital public information officers.