



FEB. 14, 2007

HEALTH UPDATE

Minnesota Department of Health Reports Fourth Influenza-Related Pediatric Death; Adult Influenza-Related Death Also Reported

The Minnesota Department of Health distributed the following health update concerning influenza-related deaths. The North Dakota Department of Health is forwarding this information to providers.

Feb 13, 2007 4:00:58 PM

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has received a report of a fourth pediatric death in a Minnesota child with influenza. The child resided in greater Minnesota, and the local public health agency is aware of the situation. The case was an 8-year-old child with multiple underlying medical conditions. The child had been vaccinated for the current influenza season. Influenza vaccine is considered 70-90% effective at preventing influenza in healthy individuals; however, it is less effective in persons with underlying medical conditions that can limit immune response to vaccine.

The influenza virus reported previously for the first three pediatric deaths was influenza A (H1). This is the same virus circulating statewide, and is well-matched to this year's influenza vaccine. Laboratory testing on the most recent case is still pending.

The current influenza season in Minnesota appears to be more severe compared with the relatively mild influenza seasons in the past several years. The recent mild seasons may be a factor in the apparent increased influenza activity in young children who likely have not previously been exposed to influenza or previously vaccinated. MDH has received reports of 275 influenza outbreaks in schools this season; 241 (88%) were reported within the past three weeks. By comparison, 199 school influenza outbreaks were reported during the entire 2005-2006 season. Nationally, 14 pediatric influenza deaths have been reported to date this season, including the first three pediatric deaths in Minnesota.

In addition, MDH has received a report of a death in a 44-year-old with influenza in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This case appears to have had underlying medical conditions, but the case is still under investigation. The person was not vaccinated. This death is receiving some news media coverage.

These influenza-related deaths serve as a reminder that influenza is a serious, potentially severe or even fatal respiratory illness. On average, a death occurs for every 1000 to 2000 influenza cases. Influenza-related deaths are generally associated with complications such as pneumonia, secondary bacterial infections, or myocarditis.

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.