



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Jan. 12, 2011

For More Information, Contact:
Tracy K. Miller, MPH
Molly Sander, MPH
Division of Disease Control
Phone: 701.328.2378
E-mail: tkmiller@nd.gov
msander@nd.gov

State Health Department Reports Influenza-Related Pediatric Death

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today reported the death of a North Dakota child from influenza, according to State Epidemiologist Tracy Miller. The child was a resident of northcentral North Dakota who had underlying medical conditions and died while hospitalized. The child was younger than 10 years and tested positive for type A influenza.

“The death of a child is always sad and unexpected,” Miller said. “Even though we rarely see children dying from influenza in North Dakota, this should remind all of us that influenza can be a serious illness and that we should take precautions to prevent the spread of the disease.”

It is never too late to protect yourself and those around you from the flu. The flu season in North Dakota is just starting, and usually does not peak until February or March. The health department is urging people, regardless of age or health status, to take time to call their doctor, local public health unit or pharmacy to get vaccinated. Most health-care providers participate in the federal Vaccines For Children program, which provides vaccines at no cost for children who are either American Indian, Medicaid-eligible, uninsured or underinsured. The majority of insurance companies, including Medicare Part B, cover the cost of influenza vaccine.

“The death of this child is a reminder of the seriousness of influenza, especially for children, older adults and those with underlying medical conditions,” said Molly Sander, Immunization Program manager for the North Dakota Department of Health. “All children six months of age and older are recommended to be vaccinated against influenza. Children younger than six months of age are too young to be vaccinated, so it is important for their close contacts and caregivers to be vaccinated to reduce the chance of passing the flu to an unprotected child.”

Eighty cases of the flu have been reported to the North Dakota Department of Health as of Jan. 12, 2011. Of those, 28 cases have been in children younger than 10.

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Typical flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and extreme fatigue. In addition to vaccination, the following precautions should be followed to help prevent the spread of flu:

- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when sneezing or coughing.
- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water.
- Stay home from work or school when you are ill.

For more influenza information and to order free education materials, visit www.ndflu.com. Reported influenza case numbers are updated every Wednesday on the website.

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Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.