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City of Milwaukee Health Department Confirms Influenza-Associated Pediatric Death

Health officials continue to urge vaccination and prevention steps to reduce spread of seasonal virus

MILWAUKEE – The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) has confirmed the influenza-associated death of a child residing in Milwaukee. The death is the first pediatric flu death statewide for the 2014-2015 flu season.

“We are deeply saddened to learn that a child has died of complications related to the seasonal flu, and our thoughts remain with the child’s family,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker.

Influenza-related hospitalizations also continue to increase, with more than 360 reported in the city of Milwaukee alone. The majority of hospitalizations reported have been in individuals age 50 and older.

“Flu can be a serious illness,” added Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “We urge all area residents to take steps to reduce the spread of flu in our community and protect those who are most vulnerable.”

Influenza (the flu) is among the most common respiratory illnesses in the United States, infecting millions of people and killing tens of thousands each year. Though common, the flu can lead to hospitalization and death, especially in the most vulnerable populations, including infants and young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and chronic lung disease.

To protect yourself and those around you, health officials recommend taking steps to:

Protect yourself: Get vaccinated and take antiviral medications as prescribed by your doctor. Flu vaccine is recommended for all individuals over 6 months of age, and can help prevent the flu or reduce the severity of symptoms if you do get sick. Antiviral medications can reduce the severity and duration of illness in individuals at risk for complications associated with the flu, especially for those with persistent or severe symptoms.

Prevent the spread: Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow, and wash your hands frequently. The flu virus is spread through the air when someone who is sick coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Washing your hands frequently with soap and water, or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, can also help prevent the spread.

Play it safe: Stay home when sick. If experiencing symptoms of seasonal flu, including fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, and fatigue, stay home from work or school, get rest, and drink plenty fluids. If you are at risk for complications, or symptoms persist or worsen, contact your health care provider.

Flu vaccine remains available through local health care providers and retail pharmacies, though area residents are advised to call ahead to determine availability. Individuals looking for a location to receive vaccine near their home can use the flu vaccine finder at www.milwaukee.gov/health.

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Think Health. Act Now!

