

Press Releases

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Connecticut DPH Reports First Influenza Deaths of 2019-2020 Season; Urges Residents to Get a Flu Shot

Flu Vaccine Now Widely Available; Residents Should not Wait to be Vaccinated

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) today is reporting the first influenza deaths of the 2019-2020 season, and is reminding residents to get vaccinated to protect their health against the flu. As the holiday season approaches and social activities increase, now is the time to protect yourself, family, and loved ones. Vaccination remains the most effective protection as the flu season can be long, running from October to May, peaking between December and March.

“I advise all Connecticut residents to take the proactive step to protect their health during flu season by getting a flu shot,” said DPH Commissioner Renee D. Coleman-Mitchell. “Flu vaccines are safe and effective, and can either help prevent you from becoming infected by this serious virus, or help lessen your symptoms if you do get sick. Talk to your health care provider, pharmacist or local health department about the easiest way to get a flu shot.”

The Flu can cause serious health problems, especially for those with chronic health conditions such as asthma, the elderly, and infants who are too young to be immunized. In the **2018-2019 flu season** DPH reported 3,506 persons hospitalized with influenza-associated illness in Connecticut, and a total of 88 influenza-associated deaths. Now is the time to get vaccinated before exposure as even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu.

To date, a total of 47 hospitalized patients with laboratory-confirmed influenza admitted between August 25 and November 9, 2019 have been reported to DPH. Of these, 38 were associated with type A (subtype unspecified), 2 with Influenza A (H1N1), 4 with influenza A (H3N2), and 3 with influenza B viruses. Two influenza-associated deaths occurred in Connecticut last week. These are the first flu-associated deaths that have been reported to DPH during the 2019-2020 flu season. The deaths involved a resident of Litchfield County and a resident of Fairfield County, both of whom were over 65 years old.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages all people over the age of six months old to be vaccinated. Vaccines are encouraged for high-risk groups, including children from 6 months to 18 years of age, women who will be pregnant during the flu season, people at least 50 years old, anyone with certain chronic medical conditions and people who live in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

It is recommended the people 65 years and older get a flu shot instead of a nasal spray vaccine. The nasal spray vaccine is only approved for use in non-pregnant individuals between the ages of 2-49 and is not effective for anyone over the age of 50. They can get any flu vaccine approved for use in that age group with no preference for any one vaccine over another. There are regular flu shots that are approved for use in people 65 years and older and there also are two vaccines designed specifically for people 65 years and older:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm>

To get vaccinated for the flu check with your regular health care provider or pharmacy to see if they have the flu vaccine available. To find a flu clinic near you, visit the HealthMap Vaccine Finder at <https://vaccinefinder.org/>

For more information on influenza and vaccination, visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

DPH posts a weekly flu update on the Influenza Surveillance and Statistics webpage: <https://portal.ct.gov/DPH/Epidemiology-and-Emerging-Infections/Influenza-Surveillance-and-Statistics>

A link to the weekly flu update can be found on the DPH main page under Featured Links titled "This Week's Flu Update"