



For Immediate Release:

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Confirmed Flu Death of Pregnant Woman in LA County

Everyone six months of age and older is urged to get a seasonal flu vaccine

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has received a report of an influenza A (H1N1)-associated death of a pregnant woman and her unborn baby from the South Bay area. Although influenza activity in Los Angeles County has been on the decline, it is still widespread and will continue at least through March. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone, six months of age or older, including pregnant women at any stage of their pregnancy. Pregnant and postpartum women are more likely than others to have severe illness from flu.

“This sad event demonstrates that serious complications can occur with flu infection in pregnant women,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Therefore, it is critical that all pregnant and postpartum women get vaccinated to protect themselves against the flu. We recommend that everyone, six months of age or older, receive either the influenza shot or the nasal spray vaccine and to practice basic hygiene, such as hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes, to prevent the spread of influenza and other respiratory diseases.”

For pregnant women with flu-like illness, immediate treatment with antiviral medication is recommended even before influenza testing is confirmed. Symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, headache, and muscle ache within the first three to five days of illness. Because immunity from flu vaccination declines over time and the strains of the flu virus can change from year to year, it is important to get vaccinated annually. Influenza accounts for up to 220,000 hospitalizations, and an average of 24,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“The flu can affect each person differently. Most individuals who get sick are able to treat themselves at home with over-the-counter medications, drinking plenty of fluids, resting and staying home from work or school. Others may develop complications such as pneumonia. If you are concerned, consult your primary care provider,” said Dr. Fielding. “Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.”

As of today, in LA County, a total of 52 confirmed deaths due to influenza among men, women, and children of all ages have been reported. Influenza vaccine remains available as are anti-virals. Residents are encouraged to contact their regular doctor or health plan for information on where and when they can get a flu vaccine. Many local community clinics and pharmacies are offering seasonal flu vaccine for a low fee.

To find locations where flu vaccinations are currently available visit <http://www.ph.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/FluLocatorMain.htm> or call the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone in the county.



Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone (except infants under six months of age). It is especially important that certain groups be vaccinated because they are either at greater risk of developing complications from the flu or because they live with or care for others who are at greater risk of developing complications. These groups are:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than five years of age
- Adults 50 years of age and older
- Anyone who is immunocompromised due to disease or medication
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or who are overweight or obese
- People with chronic medical conditions affecting the nervous system such as multiple sclerosis, seizure disorders, or who are paralyzed
- People who work or live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities as well as health care and day care workers
- Healthcare personnel working in acute care hospitals, long-term care facilities, and intermediate care facilities in Los Angeles County per the Health Officer Order on October 2, 2013

Flu is extremely contagious. Everyone is urged to practice basic hygiene to help reduce the chances of catching either the flu or other illnesses. These healthy habits include:

- Washing your hands frequently, especially after using the restroom and before and after eating
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze
- Not touching your nose, mouth, or eyes to prevent the spread of germs
- Staying home from work or school when sick

Resources

- Information about influenza and flu vaccinations can be found at www.flu.gov
- Spanish-language information about influenza and flu vaccinations can be found at <http://espanol.cdc.gov/enes/flu/index.htm>
- LA County flu vaccination location finder: www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/FluLocatorMain.htm

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

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