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Public Health official confirms first influenza-related death in Riverside County for current flu season

Health officials say a 12-year-old child who died after being hospitalized is Riverside County's first flu-related death for the current influenza season.

The child, who lived in western Riverside County, was admitted to the hospital with acute respiratory distress and tested positive for Influenza, said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, the county's public health officer. The child, who is not being identified, had a history of underlying health problems, Kaiser said.

"Our condolences go out to the family and friends of this child. The death is a disturbing reminder how serious the flu can be, particularly for those with underlying health issues, the very young and the elderly," said Kaiser. "It's also an important reminder that getting a flu shot could help you avoid the flu altogether."

During the 2015-16 flu season, there were nine flu-related deaths reported in Riverside County.

There is still time to get the flu shot, Kaiser said, adding that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all persons 6 months of age and older receive a flu vaccination each year. So far, testing has shown this year's flu vaccine to be a good match for viruses currently in circulation.

Dr. Kaiser also recommends frequent hand washing, avoiding getting close to people who are sick and maintaining a healthy lifestyle of good nutrition and daily exercise as ways to avoid the flu. It is also important for individuals who are ill with fever and cough, not to go to work or school.

For more information on where flu shots are being offered throughout Riverside County, visit www.rivcoimm.org