

NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A northern Idaho woman older than 50 is Idaho's first flu-related death this season

Idaho's first influenza-related death of the 2018-2019 influenza season occurred this week in a northern Idaho woman over the age of 50.

"The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is reminding residents that flu can be serious" said Randi Pedersen, the Idaho Influenza Surveillance Coordinator. "The most important action to take to prevent serious illness is to get a flu vaccine now."

Last year's flu season was particularly deadly, resulting in a record 101 influenza-related deaths in Idaho. That number was quadruple the average of 25 deaths each season over the last decade.

"This is a tragedy we want every family to avoid," said Logan Hudson, South Central Public Health District Nurse Manager. "We expect to see more influenza cases as we get into the winter months. It's not too late to protect yourself, and your family, by getting your flu shot."

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that infects anywhere from 5 to 20 percent of the population every year. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills, or fatigue. Most people who get influenza recover after a few days, but some people may develop serious complications.

Everyone over six months of age is recommended to get the flu vaccine. Flu vaccine is especially important for people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women, young children, and people older than 65. These people should get vaccinated because they are at higher risk of having serious flu-related complications.

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three or four influenza viruses this year. There are several different types of flu vaccine available. Speak to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to determine which is best for you.

Pedersen advises people to take these additional precautions to limit the spread of influenza:

- Wash your hands frequently. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth until you have washed your hands.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of liquids, eat nutritious foods and take part in physical activity to stay healthy.
- Avoid people who appear sick.
- Stay home from work or school when sick.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.

For information about influenza and how to stay healthy, please visit www.cdc.gov/flu or <http://flu.idaho.gov>