



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**



**NEWS RELEASE—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: Dec. 27, 2021**

**Contact:** Greg Stahl  
Public Information Officer  
208-334-0668

## **Gooding County man is Idaho’s first influenza-related death of the season**

A Gooding County man older than 65 years of age has been reported as the first influenza-related death of the 2021-22 season.

“The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is reminding residents that flu is here, and it can be very serious” said Dr. Leslie Tengelsen, Idaho influenza surveillance coordinator. “Influenza activity had been detected in Idaho and across the country ahead of the holiday season. With both influenza and the virus that causes COVID-19 circulating this season, we are concerned that the risk to Idahoans for both infections will increase as families and friends gather for the holidays. One important prevention measure to reduce serious respiratory illness for Idahoans is to get an annual influenza vaccine.”

Everyone over six months of age should get an annual influenza vaccine.

Getting the vaccine every year is especially important for people at higher risk for serious flu-related complications including people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women, young children, and anyone 65 years of age or older.

“Older adults, young children, family in long-term care facilities — they are all at higher risk and could be exposed to this disease as people gather for the holidays,” said Tanis Maxwell, South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) epidemiologist. “It can take up to two weeks for vaccines to take full effect, so it’s important you get your vaccine as soon as possible.”

Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to determine which flu vaccine is best for you.

Influenza is a contagious virus that causes respiratory illness typically between October and May and impacts 5 to 20 percent of the population every season. Symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills, or fatigue. Although most people who get the flu recover after a few days, some people may develop serious complications and even die.

During recent influenza seasons, an average of 34 influenza-related deaths occurred in Idaho residents each season, with most deaths among people over 65 years of age.

Vaccinating yourself and your loved ones against influenza, as well as taking additional precautions to prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, such as COVID-19, will help protect yourself and others.

- Wear a mask and physically distance yourself whenever you are in public.
- Wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer. 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.
- Receive the COVID-19 vaccination series

#### **Resources:**

1. Idaho influenza website: <http://flu.idaho.gov>
2. CDC Influenza website: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>
3. 2021-2022 ACIP “Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices-United States, 2020-21 Influenza Season” <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/acip-recs/vacc-specific/flu.html>

*The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is dedicated to strengthening the health, safety, and independence of Idahoans. Learn more at [healthandwelfare.idaho.gov](http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov).*