

Flu deaths on the rise in New Mexico

Written by Staff Reports

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The New Mexico Department of Health reported Jan. 3, additional flu-related deaths in the state, bringing the total so far this 2018-2019 flu season to four.

The deaths are all among people over the age of 50 from Lincoln, Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, and Mora Counties.

Since our report on Dec. 17, of the “[First Flu Death in New Mexico This Flu Season](#),” flu activity has sharply increased and is now widespread in New Mexico. Nationally, influenza activity is also on the rise.

Flu season peaks annually between December and February, and NMDOH encourages residents who haven’t gotten their flu shot yet to get one, especially if they are among those most at risk for flu-related complications or live or work with people in those at-risk populations.

“The flu vaccine is the best way for you to protect yourself and your families, especially young children and elderly family members,” said State Epidemiologist Dr. Michael Landen. “As influenza infections increase across the state, there is still time to get vaccinated if you haven’t already received flu vaccine this season. This is one of the most important disease interventions you can take advantage of for your health.”

While everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it’s especially important that people in the following groups get vaccinated, either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications:

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Pregnant women (any trimester) and up to two weeks post-partum

Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old

People age 65 and older

People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, and lung or heart disease and those who are immunosuppressed.

People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including healthcare personnel and caregivers of babies younger than 6 months

American Indians and Alaskan Natives

People who are morbidly obese

Contact your healthcare provider or local pharmacy to receive vaccine for protection against influenza and pneumonia. For help finding pharmacies in your area that may have flu and pneumococcal vaccine, visit the [HealthMap Vaccine Finder](#) or call the CDC INFO immunization hotline toll-free at 1-800-232-4636.

NMDOH's public health offices statewide provide vaccine for people with no health insurance. You can find the office nearest you at [Public Health Office](#) .

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Symptoms of seasonal flu may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, tiredness and/or muscle aches. People who might have flu – particularly if they are in the groups listed above at risk for severe disease and complications – should seek medical care and start antiviral medication as soon as possible.

In addition, there are simple things anyone can do to help prevent getting – or spreading – the flu:

Wash your hands and your children's hands frequently, especially after contact with other people.

Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze and dispose of the tissue afterward, or cough or sneeze into your sleeve if no tissues are available.

Clean your hands after you cough or sneeze, even if you use a tissue. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available and your hands are not visibly dirty.

When possible, stay home if you get the flu.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

For more information about how the [NMDOH](#) and [CDC](#) track flu cases in New Mexico and beyond visit our [Influenza Surveillance](#) webpage.