



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Flu May Have Contributed to Nine Deaths in Kent County

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Health Department was notified today that preliminary testing shows complications from influenza virus may have contributed to nine recent deaths. Six of these deaths were individuals from Kent County; three were from neighboring counties. There are over 1600 reported flu cases in Kent County so far this season.

“Most of the deaths reported to us have been elderly patients with pre-existing medical conditions,” says Adam London, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had recently reported that this year’s flu is particularly hard on older adults. “It is so important for us to check on our elderly family members, friends and neighbors, even if it’s just a daily phone call. We also should remember that the flu can also have a deadly impact on the young and those with compromised immune systems. You can protect others by protecting yourself: get a flu vaccination.” The total number of flu cases reported to KCHD as of January 3, 2015 was 1,621. Here is the weekly breakdown of reported cases:

Date	New Cases	Total for 2014-2015 season
12/06/2014	19	34
12/13/2014	40	74
12/20/2014	341	415
12/27/2014*	625*	1040*
01/03/2015	581	1621

**adjusted due to late reporting*

The flu can have serious complications for children under the age of five, the elderly, and people with already-weakened immune systems. Signs and symptoms can include:

Fever	Chills
Cough	Sore throat
Runny or stuffy nose	Muscle or body aches
Headaches	Fatigue (very tired)
Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)	

(more)

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone over 6 months of age to protect against flu viruses. The Kent County Health Department seasonal influenza program provides vaccinations for all individuals six months of age and older. The cost of the vaccine ranges from \$39-\$55; FluMist nasal spray (a live, preservative-free, four strain vaccine) is available for \$41.

Children from six months through eighteen years who have no insurance, or who have insurance that doesn't cover vaccines, will pay a sliding scale administration fee of up to \$23. The Health Department can only bill Medicaid and Medicare; private insurance is not accepted. Cash, check, MasterCard, Visa, or Discover are accepted. To make an appointment at any of our four clinic locations, call (616) 632-7200. You can also schedule online at www.stickittotheflu.com. Most primary care providers and many local pharmacies also provide influenza vaccinations and can bill private insurance.

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