



B. J. Walker, Commissioner

Georgia Department of Human Resources • Office of Communications • Dena J. Smith, Press Secretary
Two Peachtree Street, NW • Suite 29-426 • Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3142
Phone: 404-656-4937 • Fax: 404-651-6815

February 25, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
For additional media information:
Tod Rose; 404-463-2299
tsrose@dhr.state.ga.us

**DHR HEALTH OFFICIALS CONFIRM FIRST
FLU-RELATED PEDIATRIC DEATH THIS SEASON**

Activity level upgraded to widespread; public urged to exercise prevention measures and get vaccinated

ATLANTA (GA) – Department of Human Resources (DHR) public health officials have confirmed that the death of a Wilkinson County teen was caused by complications with Influenza. The 17-year-old girl, who passed away on Feb. 8, was in a high risk-group due to a preexisting chronic condition.

“This unfortunate event underscores the nature of influenza because it is very unpredictable and easily transmissible from person to person,” said Acting Director of Public Health Dr. Stuart Brown. “This incident reminds us to protect ourselves as much as possible by exercising prevention measures and getting vaccinated - especially if you are in a high-risk group.”

Brown said high-risk groups include: Persons 65 and older, infants and toddlers from 6 to 23-months, pregnant women, persons with compromised immune systems from conditions such as diabetes, HIV and AIDS or persons with chronic conditions such as asthma and heart disease. Whenever possible, high risk individuals are urged to seek influenza vaccine through their

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private healthcare provider or their local health department. Restrictions for receiving flu vaccine were lifted earlier in the season, but the risk of getting flu is greater now than earlier in the season as the influenza season traditionally peaks in February each year.

“Nationally more than 36,000 deaths and 100,000 hospitalizations occur due to complications with influenza each year,” added Brown.

Recent increases in reports of flu-like activity from multiple regions around the state prompted health officials to upgrade the state’s flu activity level from regional to widespread last week.

Symptoms and Prevention Measures

Health officials offer the following recommendations to prevent getting or spreading the flu in addition to receiving flu vaccine:

- **Flu Symptoms** – headache, fever, muscle ache, extreme fatigue, sore throat and cough. Children often exhibit gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- **Cover your coughs and sneezes** – cough and sneeze on your sleeve or tissue where possible and discard used tissue properly to avoid contact with others.
- **Stay home when sick** – if you are showing flu-like symptoms, stay home to avoid spreading flu; many cases are spread through contacts at the workplace.
- **Wash hands frequently** – flu germs can be spread by contact with door knobs, phones and shaking hands. Washing hands and avoiding contact with eyes and mouth where flu can enter the body can greatly reduce the risk of exposure to flu germs.
- **Get vaccinated** – vaccine is still available and can be obtained through your private healthcare provider or local health department. Seek medical attention if severe symptoms occur.

Reminder to Parents and Childcare Providers

State health officials also remind parents and health care providers to give two doses of flu vaccine to children who are previously unvaccinated for flu and are younger than 9-years. The vaccinations should be given at least one month apart. If a previously unvaccinated child

younger than 9-years-old receives flu vaccine this season, that child will need only one dose of vaccine next season.

For School and Daycare Resources: <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/immunization/schools.asp>

For immunization information: <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/immunization/index.asp>