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North Dakota Health Officials Report Widespread Influenza Activity

BISMARCK, N.D. – For the first time this season, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is reporting widespread influenza activity and is reminding everyone that it's not too late to get an influenza vaccine.

"Everyone 6 months and older should be vaccinated, regardless of age or health status," said Jenny Galbraith, Immunization Surveillance Coordinator with the NDDoH. "Anyone can get the flu, including healthy individuals, and getting the flu vaccine is the easiest and safest way to protect yourself, as well as your friends and family."

There have been 1,810 laboratory-identified cases reported to the NDDoH so far this season. Many of those are individuals are younger than 10. During the 2017-2018 influenza season there were 185 pediatric deaths reported in the United States. Approximately 80 percent of the deaths occurred in children who had not received a flu vaccine. So far this season there have been 22 pediatric deaths reported in the United States. Only 44 percent of kids in North Dakota age 6 months to 4 years are currently vaccinated.

Help prevent influenza by washing hands frequently, staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and getting a flu vaccine. The flu vaccine not only can prevent someone from getting sick but can reduce the risk of influenza-associated hospitalization and death. [Studies](#) have also shown that if someone does get sick but is vaccinated, they have less severe illness, reduce their risk of being hospitalized, and spend fewer days in the hospital when they are hospitalized.

People who have not had their influenza vaccine yet this season should get it as soon as possible, as it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide full protection. For information about vaccine availability, people should contact their local public health unit, health care provider, or pharmacist. For information about influenza, visit www.ndflu.com.