

Delaware Public Health Officials Confirm First Two Flu Cases of the 2021-2022 Season, Including First Pediatric Case

DOVER (NOV. 1, 2021) – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing the state's first two laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza for the 2021-2022 flu season, including the first pediatric case of the season. The cases involve a Kent County child under the age of 5, infected with influenza strain B, who was hospitalized, as well as a 26-year-old Sussex County woman, with influenza strain A, who was not hospitalized. Neither individual had received the flu vaccine.

“This first case of the flu is an excellent reminder for us to get our flu vaccine as soon as possible,” said **DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay**. “We must not get lulled into a false sense of security with last year's unusually low case numbers. With Delawareans resuming pre-pandemic activities, the flu is a definite threat to our health. Because hospitals and physicians' offices are already taxed with COVID-19 cases, we must do everything we can to prevent adding more to their burden and the flu vaccine is a very good start.”

The flu vaccine is recommended for Delawareans 6 months of age and older and can be administered at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccine. Since it takes approximately two weeks after vaccination for antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection to develop in the body, it is important to get vaccinated as early as possible to give your body time to build immunity. Getting the flu vaccine now will also provide protection during the entire flu season.

During the pre-pandemic 2019-2020 flu season, Delaware recorded more than 7,000 laboratory-confirmed flu cases. Nearly 400 Delawareans were hospitalized due to the flu and 11 people died from flu complications. During the 2020-2021 flu season, there were 26 confirmed cases of the flu, one hospitalization and one death.

DPH is offering flu vaccines when staff are out providing COVID-19 vaccines at community-based events. These events are listed at de.gov/getmyvaccine under the Community-Based events section (indicated by *DPH mobile trailer, flu vaccines also available). Additionally, a schedule for flu vaccines at Public Health clinics for uninsured and underinsured individuals can be found at: <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html>. Flu vaccines also are offered through physician offices, many pharmacies and some grocery stores. To locate where flu vaccines near you are being offered, Google "CDC flu finder" and enter your ZIP code. The flu is easy to transmit, and you can get it even from seemingly healthy, but unvaccinated, children and adults. Children, older adults, and those who have chronic underlying medical conditions are most at risk for complications from the flu and are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated now.

In addition to getting an annual flu shot, Delawareans can prevent the spread of the flu the same way they can prevent COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses:

- wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue
- wear a face covering when in public
- maintain 6 feet of space between others, especially those who reside outside of your own home
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth

The flu and COVID-19 have many similar symptoms. They include

fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue (tiredness), sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle pain or body aches, and headaches. Other signs and symptoms of COVID-19 that are different from flu include a change in or loss of taste or smell. If you are sick, the best thing to do is call your health care provider to see if you should get tested for COVID-19 or come in for a visit.

Those sick with the flu should stay home from work, school and other gatherings and not return until they have been free of fever – with a temperature of less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C), without the use of fever-reducing medications – for at least 24 hours. People with flu symptoms should avoid close contact with well people in the household – you can give someone the flu 24 hours before you show symptoms and five to seven days after you get sick. Stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other clear liquids. Over-the-counter medicines can provide symptom relief, but if you suspect you have influenza, call your doctor as they may decide to provide antiviral medications to help hasten recovery and prevent serious complications. This is particularly important for those who feel very sick, are pregnant or have chronic medical conditions.

Today's flu cases will be reported in the DPH Flu Surveillance Report later this week. For more information about the flu and where to get vaccinated, visit [\[flu.delaware.gov\]](https://flu.delaware.gov)flu.delaware.gov or call 1-800-282-8672.