

# State Health Officials Announce First Flu-Related Death of 2018-19 Season

Raleigh  
Nov 1, 2018

Officials with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health today announced the first reported flu-related death of the 2018-19 flu season, which occurred last week and involved an adult in the central part of the state. To protect the privacy of the family, the person's hometown, county, age and gender will not be released.

“We are very saddened by this death and send condolences to the loved ones of this person,” said State Epidemiologist Zack Moore, M.D., MPH. “Flu is always a serious illness, and in some cases can lead to complications and result in death, which is why we strongly encourage people to get vaccinated early and annually.”

During the 2017-18 flu season, 391 flu deaths were reported in North Carolina, the highest death toll in a single flu season since it became a requirement to report adult flu deaths to public health officials in 2009. Of those 391 deaths, 290 were people age 65 and older and seven were under the age of 18.

The CDC recommends vaccination against the flu for everyone 6 months and older with any licensed, age-appropriate flu vaccine. Vaccination against the flu can make illness milder and reduce the risk of more serious outcomes, making it especially important for those at higher risk of complications, such as people over 65 years old, children younger than 5, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Flu vaccinations are available at hospitals, pharmacies, private medical offices, some federally qualified health care centers and local health departments.

In North Carolina, flu infections are most common from late fall to early spring with activity usually peaking in January or February. The following precautions should be taken to protect against the spread of flu and other viruses:

- Stay home when sick until fever-free for at least 24 hours
- Wash hands frequently, preferably with soap and water
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then discard the tissue promptly

Anyone who thinks they have the flu should contact their doctor right away to see if they need treatment with a prescription antiviral drug, such as Tamiflu. Early treatment with an antiviral drug can help prevent flu infections from becoming more serious. Treatment with a prescription antiviral drug is especially important for hospitalized patients, people with severe flu illness and those who are at high risk of serious flu complications based on their age or health.

The Division of Public Health's surveillance for the 2018-19 flu season began Sept. 30 and will continue through late May. A surveillance summary that includes information on flu-related deaths and activity is posted every Thursday at [www.flu.nc.gov](http://www.flu.nc.gov).