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Riverside County
NEWS RELEASE

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Riverside County reports first flu-related death of 2020-21 influenza season

A man in his 80s from the San Jacinto Valley is being reported as Riverside County's first flu-related death of the 2020-21 flu season.

The man died last week at Riverside University Health System-Medical Center in Moreno Valley.

There were eight flu-related deaths in the 2019-20 flu season and nine deaths in 2018-2019 for residents under age 65, which is the required age range for reporting by California Department of Public Health.

The death comes as health officials and the community cope with the coronavirus pandemic, which has claimed more than 1,000 lives in Riverside County. There have been more than 53,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the county.

Kim Saruwatari, director of Riverside County Public Health, offered condolences to the family and said the death is a reminder that residents should get their flu shot as soon as possible.

"There has never been a more important time for someone to get their flu shot because we are also dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic," said Saruwatari. "Getting the vaccine is the most effective way to prevent contracting the flu."

Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer, said residents should get their flu shot before the end of October. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend all persons 6 months of age and older receive a flu vaccination each year, and some providers have this year's shot already in stock. Children 8 years old and under who haven't received at least two flu shots in prior seasons may need two shots to be fully protected; consult your primary care provider.

Kaiser also recommends frequent hand washing and avoiding getting close to people who are sick as ways to avoid the flu. If you or your child are sick, stay home from work and school.

Some of the same preventative measure used to slow the spread of coronavirus can also help to stop the flu, including wearing a mask, practice social distancing and frequent hand washing.

"Our condolences go to the family and friends of this individual who passed away from the flu," said Riverside County Board Chair and Fourth District Supervisor V. Manuel Perez. "As we approach the seasonal flu period, we should all get the flu shot to reduce our chances of catching the flu and spreading it. It's important and it will help avoid overwhelming the hospitals."

For more information on where flu shots are being offered throughout Riverside County, www.rivcoimm.org.

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