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TO: Grant Co. Media

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Grant County Investigates First Flu Deaths this Season

Two probable flu-associated deaths in Grant County.

GRANT COUNTY, WA – The Grant County Health District (GCHD) was notified this week of the first two probable flu-associated deaths in Grant County for the 2022-2023 flu season. GCHD is investigating the death of a woman in her 50’s, who had underlying health issues and a woman whose age is unknown at the time of this release. “We are deeply saddened to learn of these losses,” states Dr. Alexander Brzezny, Grant County Health Officer. He adds, “Since the beginning of December, there has been a significant increase in influenza cases in all age groups in Grant County.”

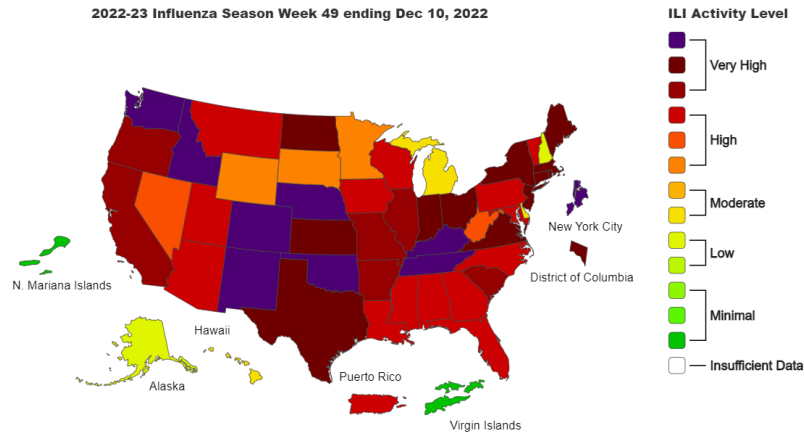
Laboratory Confirmed Flu-associated Deaths in Washington State

Table 5: Count of Reported Laboratory-Confirmed Influenza-Associated Deaths, Past Seasons to Week 49 and Total

Season	Count of Deaths as of Week 49 of Season	Count of Deaths Reported for the Entire Season (week 40 to week 39)
2022-2023, to date	40	40
2021-2022	0	26
2020-2021	0	0
2019-2020	5	114
2018-2019	4	245
2017-2018	9	296
2016-2017	6	278
2015-2016	3	67
2014-2015	1	156

Influenza-like Illness Activity – CDC produces an interactive map to illustrate influenza-like illness (ILI) activity in all 50 states. Washington has been categorized as “Very High” since the start of December. Influenza represents a majority of the ILI we are experiencing in Washington. Influenza

strain A continues to be the dominant strain in our state. The flu vaccine protects well against this strain of influenza.



Symptoms – Symptoms of the flu include temperature greater than 100F WITH a cough and /or sore throat. Those with the flu may also get headaches, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, fatigue (tiredness), and may experience vomiting and/or diarrhea. Not every person with the flu will have a fever.

Flu Prevention - In addition to the flu shot, GCHD encourages our community to practice the following habits during this severe flu and respiratory season:

- **If you are sick, stay home.** Don't pass the flu to your friends, family and co-workers.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Mask indoors.
- Avoid crowded areas.
- Disinfect highly touched surfaces.
- Avoid touching ears, nose, mouth and eyes.
- Wash your hands often (with warm water and soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and after coughing, sneezing or touching your nose or mouth.
- Avoid others with flu-like symptoms
- Watch for emergency warning signs:
 - **In Children:** Fast breathing or trouble breathing; bluish skin color; not drinking enough fluids; not waking up or not interacting; being so irritable that the child does not want to be held; flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough; fever with a rash.

- **In Adults:** Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen; sudden dizziness; confusion; severe or persistent vomiting.

If you or a family member are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home from school or work for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, (without the use of a fever-reducing medicine), unless you need to leave to receive medical care. If your doctor prescribes antiviral medication, finish the entire prescription.

Flu Treatment – Antivirals are prescription medicines that fight the flu virus. Antivirals are different than antibiotics and must be prescribed to you by a healthcare provider. It is very important that flu antiviral drugs are started as soon as possible to treat patients who are:

- Hospitalized with flu
- Very sick with the flu, but are not hospitalized
- People who are at higher risk of serious flu complications based on their age or health.

Individuals who are at a high risk for the flu should begin antiviral treatment immediately, even if symptoms are mild.

Washington is experiencing a shortage of Tamiflu, a prominent antiviral used to treat the flu.

Washington State Department of Health has an emergency stockpile of Tamiflu that can be made available to local health jurisdictions upon request. GCHD has received an initial distribution of Tamiflu to supply local facilities that are experiencing a shortage.

Are you at increased risk?

Anyone can get sick with flu, but certain people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications, including:

- Infants and children age 5 years and younger
- Adults age 65 and older
- Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum)
- People with certain chronic health conditions

Getting your annual flu vaccine reduces the chances of having severe complications from infection.

There are flu vaccines available in various locations, including health care provider offices and pharmacies.

Flu Vaccine – It is not too late to get your flu shot. GCHD urges all residents **6 months and older to get their flu shot as soon as possible.** Flu activity typically increases in the winter months when people spend more time indoors around each other. People who haven't been vaccinated against the flu still have time to get the vaccine before the season reaches its peak.

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu shot this season.

- Only injectable flu vaccines (flu shot) are recommended this season.
- Flu shots do work. CDC found that flu shots reduced a child's risk of ending up at the doctor's office sick with flu by more than 60% last season.

Children 6 months through 8 years of age need either 1 or 2 doses of vaccine.

- Children 6 months through 8 years getting vaccinated for the first time, or who have only previously received 1 dose of vaccine in the past, should get 2 doses this season.
 - The first dose should be given as soon as vaccine is available to “prime” the immune system.
 - The second dose should be given at least 28 days later to build more and longer lasting immune protection.
 - Children who only get 1 dose, but need 2 doses, are likely to have less or possibly no protection from that single dose.
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