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**Statewide Press Release**

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### **Kentucky Reports First Pediatric Influenza Death This Respiratory Virus Season**

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 7, 2025)** – Today, state health officials with the Kentucky Department for Public Health announced that a child in Kentucky has died from influenza. The child had not received this season’s flu vaccine.

“Influenza is on the rise across Kentucky,” said Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Department for Public Health. “Unfortunately, viruses like influenza and COVID-19 are serious diseases that can be deadly to some people, including children. Vaccination is the best way to prevent severe illness and death.”

Kentucky also reported its first COVID-19 pediatric death of the 2024-2025 respiratory virus season last month. Hospitalizations and emergency department visits related to influenza are increasing in Kentucky. The most current data on respiratory virus activity in Kentucky is available online, [here](#).

Though most influenza and COVID-19 infections result in mild illness, serious symptoms such as difficulty or fast breathing, seizures, bluish lips or face, high fever (above 104 degrees), fever or cough that improves but then comes back or gets worse, dehydration (e.g., reduced urine output, dry mouth, no tears when crying), or worsening of other medical conditions require medical attention. Antiviral treatment of influenza and COVID-19 are also recommended for some individuals to reduce the severity of illness.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone six months of age and older get the annual flu and COVID-19 vaccine, especially children who are younger than 5 or anyone with a [high-risk medical condition](#). Vaccinations are effective at reducing the risk of infection, hospitalization and death.



Influenza vaccination rates have been declining in recent years. Less than 17% of Kentucky children have received a flu vaccine this season, and just 2% have received an updated COVID-19 vaccine.

“It is important for people who have not been vaccinated this season to get their updated influenza and COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible, along with other recommended immunizations, to protect themselves and others,” added Dr. Stack.

There have been widespread reports of flu and respiratory virus outbreaks and of schools closing or using nontraditional instruction days across the commonwealth due to high levels of illness.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines are widely available in health care provider offices and pharmacies. Vaccination can be given any time during the flu season, and the flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same time. Most individuals can receive COVID-19 and flu vaccines for free. To find a flu or COVID-19 vaccine, visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

Health officials also encourage good health habits to prevent transmission of flu and other respiratory illnesses. These include washing hands often with soap and warm water, covering coughs and sneezes and staying at home from work or school when sick.

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*For more information about the Department for Public Health, visit <https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/Pages/default.aspx>.*