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Child is first flu-associated death in Riverside County

A child from western Riverside County is the first reported flu-associated death in the county, health officials reported.

The child, who was younger than 10 years of age, died at a local hospital recently after being taken to the facility with respiratory symptoms. The child had been ill for several days and tested positive for influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) .

No further information about the child is being released.

“Any premature death is a tragedy, but the death of a child is particularly difficult. Our thoughts are with the family, friends and others impacted by the death of this young child,” said Public Health Director Kim Saruwatari.

The death comes as the community struggles with the impact of the ongoing influenza season, along with increases in RSV and COVID-19 cases, all which have strained the county’s hospital system and jammed emergency departments with ailing patients.

Health officials said there are various steps residents can take to protect themselves from the respiratory illnesses, starting with getting vaccinated against COVID-19 and influenza.

Other safety steps include:

- Wash hands frequently.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Keep children home when sick.
- Consider indoor masking.
- Disinfect frequently used surfaces.

Young children and infants do not have fully developed immune systems, so they can be more susceptible to severe illness from viruses, as can those with underlying health conditions like prematurity and heart defects. Health officials urge family and friends to be extra cautious when holding or kissing newborns, always wash your hands beforehand and consider wearing a mask.

“These simple steps can protect the most vulnerable of our community,” Saruwatari said.

For more information about respiratory illnesses, click www.rivcoph.org