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Contact:

Kerri S. Mabee
Public Information Officer
Riverside University Health System
P: 951.467.7542 | E: k.mabee@ruhealth.org

Public Health Announces First Pediatric Influenza-Related Death of 2025-2026 Flu Season

RIVERSIDE, CA (March 26, 2026) - Health officials with Riverside University Health System – Public Health (RUHS – PH) report that a western Riverside County teen has died from a flu-related illness – the first confirmed pediatric flu death of the 2025-2026 flu season in Riverside County.

The death occurred in early March and was identified through death records. The teen was not believed to have any underlying health conditions; a flu vaccination record was not located.

“Such a loss is devastating and is a heartbreaking reminder that seasonal respiratory viruses can be life-threatening, even for otherwise healthy children,” said Dr. Jennifer Chevinsky, Riverside County Public Health Officer.

As of March 20, 2026, 115 pediatric influenza-associated deaths have been reported nationwide, including five in California. According to [the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), approximately 85% of reported pediatric deaths this season have occurred among children who were not fully vaccinated against influenza.

Respiratory viruses such as influenza and RSV continue to impact our community, with ongoing illness and strain on families and healthcare systems.

“These viruses can lead to serious complications for anyone, but especially for young children, older adults and those with underlying conditions. It’s important everyone knows the signs of when to seek emergency care,” said Dr. Chevinsky.

Most people who get flu will recover in a few days to less than two weeks, but some will develop complications such as pneumonia that can be life-threatening. Immediate medical attention should be sought for children experiencing chest pain, trouble breathing, seizures, severe muscle pain, dehydration (dry mouth) or ribs pulling in with each breath while battling a respiratory virus. Adults who experience worsening shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, severe muscle pain or weakness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting or worsening of chronic medical conditions should also seek emergency care.

Residents are encouraged to stay up to date on recommended vaccinations and get tested when experiencing symptoms. At-home combined influenza/COVID-19 tests can be used when available.

High-risk and hospitalized patients with suspected flu should receive antiviral treatment without delay; treatments include oseltamivir or single-dose baloxavir, which reduce the risk of serious illness and hospitalization.

Taking these steps helps protect not only individual health, but the wellbeing of the entire community.

Influenza season generally runs from October to April. Vaccinations for flu and other illnesses are available at medical offices and pharmacies, and through RUHS - Public Health's [vaccine clinics](#).

For more information, visit www.ruhealth.org/publichealth.

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About Riverside University Health System – Public Health

Riverside University Health System – Public Health (RUHS - PH) serves as Riverside County's public health department. RUHS-PH offers a range of services and programs to promote and protect the health of all county residents and visitors in service of the well-being of the community. RUHS includes the 439-bed Medical Center in Moreno Valley, Calif., 14 Community Health Centers across Riverside County, and Behavioral Health, which provides emergency and inpatient psychiatric care. Visit www.ruhealth.org to learn more.