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AAP News

CDC: 2019-'20 flu deaths tie record; officials urge vaccination

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor



Pediatric deaths from flu tied a record last season, and officials are urging everyone to get vaccinated against influenza this fall when both flu and COVID-19 are expected to be circulating.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently received a report of a child who died of flu in February, bringing the total number of pediatric deaths to 188. The death toll is the same as the high mark set for a non-pandemic season in 2017-'18. Typically, about 80% of children who die were not vaccinated.

An early surge of influenza B made the recent season an especially tough one for children. Hospitalization rates for children ages 4 years and under were at a record high even surpassing the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, and rates for children ages 5-17 were higher than any recent regular season.

Health officials have said they don't know whether COVID-19 precautions like social distancing, face coverings and frequent handwashing will keep flu rates low this season. They worry both viruses circulating at the same time could overwhelm health care systems.

More than 5.5 million people in the U.S. have had confirmed cases of COVID-19, and more than 174,000 have died, according to [Johns Hopkins University](#). During the recent flu season, the CDC estimates as many as 56 million people got sick and 62,000 died.

The [AAP and CDC recommend](#) everyone 6 months and older get vaccinated with any licensed, age-appropriate vaccine. The AAP will be releasing its flu policy for the 2020-'21 season on Sept. 8.

Manufacturers will supply 194 million to 198 million doses, about 20 million more than last season, according to the CDC.

CDC Director Robert Redfield, M.D., said Friday the CDC has purchased about 2 million more pediatric doses and 9.3 million more adult doses than usual.



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"These additional doses will ensure parents who may be newly unemployed understand the Vaccines for Children safety net program that grants access for the uninsured and underinsured children and to guarantee adults at higher risk of COVID can get flu vaccine this September and October," he said.

Resources

- [AAP resources to help pediatricians prepare for flu season](#)
- [Information from the CDC about flu](#)
- [CDC's VaccineFinder website](#)
- [AAP News stories on flu](#)
- [Information on flu from the AAP Red Book](#)