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Health officials: Man who died tested positive for influenza

A 30-year-old Coachella Valley man who died has tested positive for influenza. Health officials said it is the first influenza-related death of the flu season in Riverside County.

The man tested positive for the H1N1 strain and died this week after being briefly hospitalized, according to Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer. Officials are investigating whether the patient had other underlying health issues that may have contributed to his death.

Officials have not confirmed whether the patient had received a flu vaccine, which can be effective against the H1N1 strain.

Riverside County has seen some recent increases in instances of influenza-like illness, but the overall flu activity is within the expected levels for this time of year. Statewide, flu activity has increased recently.

Officials emphasize there are ways to reduce the chances of catching the flu. Influenza vaccination is important and the most effective protection against flu viruses, Kaiser said. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that all persons 6 months of age and older receive a flu vaccination each year.

“Some people wrongly believe that it is too far into the flu season,” Kaiser said. “That is not the case. There is still time and the vaccine is readily available.”

Effective hand washing and proper covering of coughs and sneezing also help to prevent the spread of flu. Individuals, who are ill with cough and fever, are encouraged not to go work or school to limit exposure of co-workers and classmates.