

4.24.15

Influenza death reported in Humboldt County

A Humboldt County woman who died this week has tested positive for Influenza. A second woman, seriously ill, has also tested positive for the virus.

The woman who died was in her 40s and in otherwise good health. The second patient is in her 50s with several underlying medical conditions.

Humboldt County Health Officer Dr. Donald Baird offered his condolences to the victim's friends and family, calling the death "a sad reminder" that influenza can have devastating consequences for anyone, regardless of age and medical condition.

Tests indicate that in both cases the type of virus present is Influenza B, which tends to strike later in the season after Influenza A has run its course. This year's vaccine contains strains of both Influenza A and B.

The vaccination status of the two victims is unknown. To protect their confidentiality, no additional information about them will be provided.

Department of Health & Human Services' Public Health Director Susan Buckley said to have two such serious cases this late in the year is unusual. "As far as we know, the two cases are unconnected," Buckley said.

She noted that while flu season generally ends in April or May, vaccines are still available in some locations. "If you haven't been vaccinated yet this season, now is the time. Flu is still out there, and it can still be dangerous."

Flu shots and flu mist are both available at the Public Health Clinic located at 529 I St. in Eureka. A \$17 donation is requested but no one will be turned away for inability to pay.

Flu activity in California is currently characterized by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) as "sporadic." Until this week, Humboldt County had no reportable cases for the 2014-15 flu season. A reportable case is one that is lab-confirmed in a patient aged 0 to 64 years involving either an ICU admission or death.

To date the Public Health Laboratory has tested 168 specimens, with 26 returning positive for Influenza A and 13 for Influenza B. Samples from the two patients have been sent to CDPH for additional testing.

To make an appointment at the Public Health Clinic, phone 268-2108.