

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
BC Centre for Disease Control

BRITISH COLUMBIA HAS FIRST H1N1-CONFIRMED DEATH

VICTORIA – A young child from the Fraser Health region is the first known person in British Columbia to die from the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus, while a young woman in the same health region has also died in connection with the H1N1 influenza outbreak.

“Any death is a tragedy, and I extend my sympathies to the families at this very difficult time,” said provincial health officer Dr. Perry Kendall. “As unfortunate and tragic as these cases are, it was not unexpected that British Columbia would see some deaths caused by or associated with the H1N1 flu virus.”

The child, who had underlying medical conditions increasing the risk of influenza complications, was admitted to hospital on Sunday and died within 24 hours of admission. Testing has confirmed the child did have the H1N1 flu virus.

The woman, who also had an underlying medical condition, was admitted to hospital last Wednesday. Although this patient was not confirmed to have the H1N1 flu virus herself, she resided with a person who did have the virus.

“These severe outcomes of the pandemic are a reminder that influenza is not to be trivialized,” said Dr. Danuta Skowronski, physician epidemiologist at the BC Centre for Disease Control. “It is important that people continue to take precautions to protect themselves and others. That means frequent hand washing, staying home if they’re sick, coughing or sneezing into the crook of the elbow sleeve and seeking care early in the case of underlying conditions or pregnancy.”

So far, illness caused by the H1N1 flu virus is not substantially different than regular seasonal influenza, which itself can result in between 400 and 800 deaths in British Columbia each year. Currently, there have been a total of 382 confirmed H1N1 cases in B.C., with 191 of those occurring in the Fraser Health region. Overall, 14 patients with H1N1 have been admitted to hospital and five of those 14 have been admitted to the intensive care unit.

For factsheets, resources, updates and more information on how to protect yourself against the H1N1 flu virus, visit www.gov.bc.ca/swineflu.

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