



**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Influenza-Related Death of 56-Year-Old Female Resident Confirmed in SLO County  
*First Reported Death of Person Under Age 65 in SLO County for this Influenza Season***

San Luis Obispo — The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department confirmed today that a female resident in her fifties has died of complications related to type B influenza infection (flu). This is the first reportable death associated with influenza in San Luis Obispo County this season. This patient had at least one underlying risk factor that predisposed her to severe complications of influenza.

Healthcare providers are required to report cases of influenza in patients hospitalized in the Intensive Care Unit or deaths associated with influenza among persons less than 65 years of age.

Health officials report that the 2017-18 influenza season has brought more cases of flu and more severe illness, earlier in the year than usual.

"The impact of flu is very serious this year, across the nation and here in SLO County," said Dr. Penny Borenstein, Health Officer of the County of San Luis Obispo.

This means local emergency medical services—including emergency rooms and ambulances—have been stretched to near capacity over the past week. Health officials urge otherwise healthy people with routine cases of flu to rest and recover at home so that emergency services are available for people with life-threatening complications.

Flu can be dangerous and even healthy people can sometimes experience serious complications. If you experience any of these symptoms when you have the flu, seek medical attention immediately:

- Difficulty breathing (more than regular congestion)
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or severe abdominal pain
- Confusion
- Sudden dizziness
- Severe vomiting or vomiting that won't stop

Some people are especially at risk for serious complications from the flu. These people should be especially alert and seek specific treatment against the flu virus from their regular doctor's office, or, if a primary care provider is not available, an urgent care center. These groups of people include:

- Children younger than 2 years
- Adults aged 65 years and older

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- People with chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver, blood, and metabolic disorders (such as diabetes) or neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions
- People with immunosuppression, caused by medications or by HIV infection
- Women who are pregnant or postpartum (within 2 weeks after delivery)
- People younger than 19 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- People of American Indian/Alaska Native descent
- People with extreme obesity (i.e., body-mass index is equal to or greater than 40)
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

If you do not experience these symptoms and are not in these high-risk groups but are concerned about flu-like symptoms, call your regular healthcare provider. If you do not have a regular healthcare provider, call your local urgent care center.

Keep reading for additional FAQs regarding the flu in San Luis Obispo County.

### **What can I do to protect myself?**

- **Wash your hands.** Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds. (Need a timer? Sing the "happy birthday" song twice.) If soap and water aren't available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.** This helps prevent the spread of the virus.
- **Avoid contact with people who are sick.** This might mean you need to delay a visit, or meet by phone or video chat instead.
- **Get the flu shot.** While the flu shot offers most protection if you get it early in the season, it's better now than never. The flu shot provides protection against multiple strains of flu, including those that may circulate later in the season. If you get a flu vaccine but still get the flu, you will most likely have more mild illness and less risk of serious complications. You can get your flu shot from your healthcare provider, at many local pharmacies, or at [Public Health Department clinics](#).

### **What should I do if I have the flu?**

- **Stay home.** If you get sick with flu symptoms, in most cases, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible. Rest, stay hydrated, and take temperature-reducing medicines (such as Tylenol or ibuprofen) as needed.
- **Keep it to yourself.** Don't share the flu. Wash your hands often and use a tissue to cover your cough or sneeze. Avoid spending time with other people, especially those who are at risk for serious complications of the flu. This may mean you need to delay a visit or a meeting.
- **Look out for signs that it may be more serious.** In most cases, you do not need medical care or prescription medicine to recover from the flu. However, some cases can be more serious. See the symptoms described above for signs that you may need to see a healthcare provider.

### **Should I take Tamiflu or other antiviral medicine? What about antibiotics?**

Your doctor may prescribe an antiviral medicine such as Tamiflu to help reduce symptoms of the flu, especially if you are at risk of serious complications. If your doctor prescribes antiviral medicine, be sure to take it as directed.

If you are generally healthy (except for the flu), your doctor may not prescribe this medicine. Most of the time, people who are generally healthy do not need to take antiviral medicine for the flu.

If you or someone you know is taking Tamiflu, it's important to follow all regular precautions to avoid catching or spreading the flu. Research does not consistently show that it can reduce the risk of giving the flu to others.

Antibiotics are not effective against the flu. Taking antibiotics when you don't need them can expose you to unwanted side effects and can contribute to antibiotic resistance, making the drugs less effective when we do need them.

### **How long is someone contagious after getting the flu?**

A person may be considered no longer contagious after:

- At least seven days past the start date of their illness.
- 24 hours with no fever, and no use of fever-reducing medicine (such as Tylenol or ibuprofen)

That means if you have been sick with the flu for more than seven days and still have a fever, you can still spread the virus to others. (Some people, especially children, may spread the virus for more than seven days.) You need to meet both conditions to be no longer contagious.

People often cough for a period of time after recovering from the flu because of the damage it causes to lungs and airways. That cough does not necessarily mean the person is still contagious.

### **I already had the flu. Should I get the flu shot?**

Yes. The flu vaccine protects against three to four strains of the flu. If you've had one strain, you are still susceptible to the other strains. Get your flu shot!

### **Where can I learn more?**

Visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

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