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NEWS RELEASE

Six Pediatric Flu-associated Deaths Reported in Texas

El Paso flu cases now up nearly 90 percent from last season

EL PASO, Texas – The number of flu cases continues to rise in El Paso, with the majority of cases being children between one and nine years old. The Department of Public Health has received reports of more than 700 cases of influenza reported so far this season. That's compared to 372 cases recorded at the same time last year.

"Health officials from across the state are reporting large numbers of pediatric and adolescent flu cases, and a total of six flu-associated pediatric deaths," said Robert Resendes, Public Health Director. "It's vital that parents ensure that their children are vaccinated to prevent illness and possible death."

While the typical flu season begins with type A strains and usually ends with type B, this year, the season has shown an increased number of B strain flu cases at the beginning of the season. Type B flu strains can affect anyone, but typically affects children and young adults more than the elderly, which is why many health officials are concerned for the safety of children during this particular flu season.

The first defense against the flu is the flu vaccine, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone six months of age and older receive the vaccine every year. Most insurances cover flu vaccines at little or no cost via primary healthcare providers or local retail outlets. The Department of Public Health's Immunization Program offers low-cost vaccines for children who meet the state guidelines via their three clinics. Appointments can be made by calling (915) 212-6555.

In addition to the vaccine, people can help stop the spread of illness and reduce their chance of catching the flu by washing hands frequently, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home if they're sick.

For more information on flu prevention and flu vaccines, please visit www.EPHealth.com or in Spanish at www.EPSalud.com.

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