

WHO: nearly 5,000 swine flu deaths worldwide

October 23 2009

(AP) -- Nearly 5,000 people have reportedly died from swine flu since it emerged this year and developed into a global epidemic, the World Health Organization said Friday.

Since most countries have stopped counting individual swine flu cases, the figure is considered an underestimate.

WHO said there were 4,999 total deaths through Oct. 18, most of them in the Western Hemisphere. The figure was up 264 from a week earlier.

Iceland had its first swine flu death this week, and WHO said Sudan and Trinidad and Tobago also reported deaths from the virus for the first time this week.

In the United States, swine flu caused at least 95 children's deaths since April, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) said Friday.

Forty-six states now have widespread flu activity, the CDC said, adding that only Connecticut, Hawaii, New Jersey and South Carolina are without widespread flu.

In London, drug maker [GlaxoSmithKline](#) PLC said children may only need one shot of its swine flu vaccine to be protected.

In its statement Friday, [Glaxo](#) said one dose was enough to boost children's immune systems to fight the virus, based on data from a trial

in Spain in 200 children aged six months to 3 years.

Glaxo's finding comes after experts said they expected children would need two doses, since their immune systems are weaker than those of adults. Last week, rival vaccine maker Sanofi Aventis said children would likely need two doses of vaccine against swine flu, or H1N1.

GlaxoSmithKline's Pandemrix vaccine contains an adjuvant, a chemical compound that stretches a vaccine's active ingredient and increases the human body's immune response. While European flu vaccines commonly use adjuvants, there is limited data on how safe they are in groups including children and pregnant women.

The adjuvant in Glaxo's swine flu vaccine has been used in more than 41,000 people in [bird flu](#), swine flu and regular flu vaccines.

Swine flu vaccines in the U.S. do not have adjuvants. Some countries have ordered special stocks of vaccines without adjuvants for their at-risk populations.

While most people recover from swine flu without needing medical treatment, the virus strikes children particularly hard.

According to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than half of hospitalizations and nearly a quarter of deaths due to swine flu are in children and adults under 25.

An Associated Press-GfK poll found that a third of American parents don't want their [children](#) to get the swine flu shot, with many citing concerns about side effects.

Of the thousands of people who have so far received the [swine flu](#) vaccine, the most commonly reported side effects have been soreness

where the injection was given and minor flu symptoms.

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