

British flu death toll hits 39

December 31 2010

Britain's flu death toll has risen to 39 since October, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) announced Thursday, with 36 of the fatalities due to swine flu.

The HPA confirmed 12 more [flu](#) deaths this week, saying all except one case were under 65 years of age and four were under the age of five.

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley urged people to be vaccinated and said he would relaunch on Saturday the "Catch it, bin it, kill it" advert about using tissues and hand-washing that has been used in previous upsurges in flu cases.

"The first line of defence against flu is to be vaccinated -- I urge everyone in an at-risk group who hasn't been vaccinated to contact their general practitioner (doctor) and book an appointment," he said.

The figures come after Wednesday's announcement that flu cases rose by more than 40 percent last week.

The Royal College of General Practitioners reported the incidence of flu in England and Wales reached 124 per 100,000 of the population in the week ending Sunday.

There were 86 per 100,000 cases in the previous week.

So-called "seasonal" [flu epidemics](#) are annual health problems in temperate countries with the onset of winter.

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