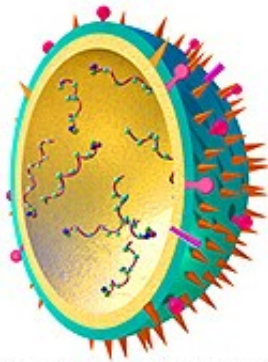


# CDC urging flu vaccination, prompt use of antivirals

January 13 2015

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Influenza virus. Illustration courtesy U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

(HealthDay)—Thousands of people are being hospitalized and 26 children have died from influenza so far, Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said during a Friday press briefing.

The predominant strain is H3N2, and it's not a good match to the strains in this year's [flu vaccine](#). "Years that have H3N2 predominance tend to have more hospitalizations and more deaths," Frieden said. He noted that [hospitalization rates](#) for flu have risen to 92 per 100,000 people this season, primarily due to the H3N2 strain. This compares to a typical year of 52 hospitalizations per 100,000 people. In an average year, more than

200,000 people are hospitalized for flu and the number of children's deaths varies from as few as 30 to as many as 170 or more, CDC officials said.

The CDC continues to recommend that everyone 6 months and older get an influenza vaccination, Frieden said. The reason: There's more than one type of [flu strain](#) circulating, and the vaccine protects against at least three strains of circulating virus. Frieden also stressed the benefit of [antiviral drugs](#) such as Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (inhaled zanamivir), especially this year.

"Treatment with antiviral flu drugs is even more important this year," he said. "These drugs work, but they aren't being used nearly enough. They can reduce symptoms, shorten the duration of illness, and prevent serious complications. They could even save your life." Frieden reiterates that to be most effective, these drugs need to be given early—at the first sign of symptoms.

**More information:** [More Information](#)

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