



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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FLU UPDATE – DEC. 24, 2003

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) reports another flu-associated death, and an increased percentage of people with flu-like symptoms at local emergency departments.

A 51-year-old woman died Dec. 23 of influenza associated illness; this brings the County's total of flu-associated deaths to six. Other deaths associated with flu include a 56-year-old man, an 83-year-old woman, a 16-year-old boy, an 88-year-old woman, and a 91-year-old woman. Two other cases – a 13-year-old girl and a 15-year-old boy – are being investigated to determine if their deaths are associated with flu.

For the week of Dec. 14 to Dec. 20, hospital emergency departments surveyed by HHS reported that 28 percent of patients came in with flu-like illnesses. This is up from 24 percent for the previous week's reporting period (Dec. 7 – Dec. 13). Percentages for each hospital are not available.

Since schools are out of session for the holidays, the percentage of students who were absent from school for any reason was not tracked from Dec. 14 to Dec. 20.

San Diego County remains at Level II in the *County Health Services Capacity Task Force Plan*. "The local health care system is handling the increased volume of patients due to flu-associated illness," said Nancy Bowen, M.D., San Diego County Public Health Officer. "HHS and hospital partners, however, continue to monitor the situation carefully."

There are limited doses of vaccine available in some County-run public health centers. Private health care providers and some other community health clinics also have doses. For information, please contact the *San Diego Community Health Improvement Partners* (SDCHIP); call toll free, 877-FLU-0202 or visit their Web site: www.sdchip.org

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