



STATE OF HAWAI'I
KA MOKU 'ĀINA O HAWAI'I

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

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FIRST HAWAI'I PEDIATRIC INFLUENZA-ASSOCIATED DEATH OF THE 2024-2025 SEASON RECORDED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HONOLULU — The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) announced today the first influenza-associated death in a Hawai'i resident under the age of 18 during this influenza, or flu season. This child was a Hawai'i County resident with underlying medical conditions. While specimens were not available for subtyping beyond the positive influenza result, medical and exposure history pointed to seasonal influenza as the most likely cause of illness. This case is not believed to be associated with the recent wastewater detection of H5 in Hilo. Out of respect for the family's privacy, no further information about the child is being released.

"It is always a tragedy to lose any life, and we all feel it even more deeply when it is one of our keiki," said DOH Director Dr. Kenneth Fink. "Seasonal influenza remains a significant health concern. If you or your loved ones have not received the flu vaccine this season, I hope you will consider doing so to help protect your 'ohana and those around you, particularly with gatherings during the holiday season."

Hawai'i has seen an increase in [respiratory disease activity](https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease-types/respiratory-viruses/) as we enter the holiday season. Flu activity is currently low but increasing, RSV activity is at a medium level and increasing, while COVID-19 activity is low and stable. The Respiratory Disease Activity Summary dashboard can be found on the Disease Outbreak Control Division website at <https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease-types/respiratory-viruses/>.

Flu vaccination lowers the risk of severe disease, emergency department visits, hospitalization and death. Everyone ages 6 months and older can receive an influenza vaccine at pharmacies, clinics or health care facilities. A list of COVID-19 and flu vaccination locations can be found at <https://www.vaccines.gov/>. DOH encourages anyone who is not up to date with vaccinations, or is unsure whether they are up to date, to consult with a pharmacist or health care provider about getting vaccinated.

Hawai'i's last pediatric death from influenza occurred in January 2024. During the 2023-2024 flu season, Hawai'i recorded one pediatric death due to influenza. Nationwide, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has reported two influenza-associated pediatric deaths for the current 2024-25 flu season.

"Flu vaccines are widely available; we recommended everyone ages 6 months and older get vaccinated against the flu each year," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Kemble. "Take one task off your holiday to-do list by going to get flu shots for yourself and your loved ones today."

While vaccination is the best protection against flu, basic prevention measures can also reduce the spread of flu, COVID-19 and RSV. Daily actions such as hand washing, staying home when sick, and covering oneself when coughing and sneezing can help stop the spread of germs and increase your protection. While not required, masking is also still an effective prevention measure for respiratory illnesses. Consider wearing a well-fitted mask in crowded indoor settings or when traveling.

More information about influenza and other respiratory diseases is available at <https://health.hawaii.gov/docd/disease-types/respiratory-viruses/>.

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