U.S. Flu Deaths Reach Epidemic Levels; CDC Pushes Flu Shots

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This winter's flu season is proving particularly dangerous, with deaths appearing to reach epidemic levels, The New York Times reports. However, officials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) told the Times that while many Americans may continue to suffer from the flu throughout the coming weeks, caseloads might be peaking. Still, the CDC urges all Americans to receive a flu shot. A preliminary study from the health agency has shown this year's vaccine can reduce by 62 percent the likelihood of coming down with a case of the flu bad enough to send an individual to the doctor or a hospital.

People with HIV tend not to respond as well to the flu vaccine as compared with the general population. A recent study showed that administering a quadruple dose can erase those deficits. For those who do come down with the illness—its symptoms include fever, body aches, extreme fatigue and dry cough—physicians can prescribe Tamiflu and Relenza, which can reduce the flu's severity if taken early enough.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo declared a public health emergency in New York State following 20,000 reported cases of flu, the worst epidemic in that state since at least 2009. The declaration allows New York pharmacists to deliver flu vaccines to children ages 6 months to 18 years old, whereas they would otherwise be barred by law.

To read the New York Times report on the flu epidemic, click here.

To read the Times report on New York's epidemic, click here.

To read the CDC study on the flu vaccine, click here.

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