



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 19, 2009

MEDIA CONTACT: Laura Oxley, ADHS Public Information: (602) 542-1094  
Jesse Lewis, ADHS Communication: (602) 542-1081

## **Arizona Teen Dies from Influenza**

The first Arizona pediatric death of the 2008-09 influenza season happened last week in Coconino County. The teenager is the fifth pediatric death in the country this flu season. In general, influenza is getting off to a slow start in Arizona and around the country this year.

"Flu season is here and you need to protect yourself from germs," said Interim Health Services Director Will Humble. "Influenza can be lethal, but you don't have to be a victim. Wash your hands. If you get sick, cover your cough and don't go to work or school." Influenza is much worse than a regular cold. Symptoms include high fever, achiness, cough, and tiredness. The main distinction from a cold is influenza comes on strong. With the flu, you can be fine in the morning and by lunch, you feel like you were hit by a truck.

So far this year, 262 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza have been identified in Arizona. At this time last year, there were 2,116 cases. There were 2 pediatric deaths in Arizona during the 2007-08 flu season. On average about 36,000 people die from influenza and related pneumonia every year in the U.S. The latest Arizona statistics are on the ADHS website. Influenza is a vaccine-preventable disease. The influenza vaccine is recommended yearly for all adults over 50 years, children 6-months to 18-years old, pregnant women, those with chronic health problems, and anyone who comes into contact with these groups. Since October of last year, more than a quarter-million influenza vaccines were given in Arizona. Centers for Disease Control recommends people continue to be vaccinated even after the flu season begins. You can find places still giving vaccinations at [www.fluaz.org](http://www.fluaz.org).

###