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**(S.D.)-State Officials Say Influenza Has Hit Early This Season**



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 09/28/2012 10:30 AM

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) - State health officials say influenza has come early to South Dakota.

State epidemiologist Don Kightlinger says already this season, four cases have been confirmed, all in children. He adds that the vaccine is readily available this year and that "now is a good time to be vaccinated."

According to a state news release Thursday, about 51 percent of South Dakotans over age 6 months were vaccinated last season. The state gives children between 6 months and 18 years old free vaccines.

Kightlinger also implores that people use common sense to stop the flu from spreading, such as by washing hands frequently, covering mouths when coughing and sneezing and staying home when sick.