# Flu remains widespread in US; eases in some areas

MARILYNN MARCHIONE - AP Chief Medical Writer - Associated Press

Nine more children or teens have died of the flu, bringing the nation's total this flu season to 29, health officials reported Friday.

In a typical season, about 100 children die of the flu, so it is not known whether this year will be better or worse than usual.

So far, half of confirmed flu cases are in people 65 and older, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.

This year's season is earlier than normal and the dominant flu strain is one that tends to make people sicker. The flu is widespread in all states but Tennessee and Hawaii and is starting to ease in some areas, the CDC said.

Health officials say it's not too late to get a flu shot to help protect against the flu. Vaccinations are recommended for anyone 6 months or older.

Last week, the CDC said the flu again surpassed an "epidemic" threshold, based on monitoring of deaths from flu and a frequent complication, pneumonia. The flu epidemic happens every year and officials say this year's vaccine is a good match for strains that are going around.

The government doesn't keep a running tally of adult deaths from the flu, but estimates that it kills about 24,000 people most years.

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Online:

CDC flu: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm

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