



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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Healthy People in Healthy Communities

INFLUENZA OUTBREAKS DECLARED IN SAN BENITO COUNTY Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
28December2017

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(San Benito County) Influenza, commonly known as the flu, has arrived in San Benito County. 27 confirmed cases have been reported by the Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital laboratory in the past two weeks, and two local long term care facilities have reported outbreaks.

Statewide, the picture is similar. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared influenza activity in California “widespread”. 22 other states also have widespread flu activity, up from 12 last week.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness. Serious outcomes of flu infection can result in hospitalization or death. Some people, such as older people, young children, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions, such as chronic disease and weakened immune systems, are at high risk of serious flu complications.

Influenza is very common, affecting more than 3 million people in the US every year. This year’s flu strain is expected to be particularly impactful, with a particularly virulent influenza strain and a lower than usual protection rate from the vaccine.

The influenza viruses attack the lungs, nose, and throat. Symptoms include fever, chills, muscle aches, cough, congestion, runny nose, sore throat, headaches, and fatigue. Duration of illness varies, but usually resolves within a few days. Influenza spreads easily, through airborne respiratory droplets (coughs or sneezes), skin-to-skin contact (handshakes or hugs), saliva (kissing or shared drinks), and by touching a contaminated surface (doorknob or blanket).

The flu is treated primarily with rest and fluid to let the body fight the infection on its own. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory pain relievers may help with symptoms. Symptomatic persons should stay at home to prevent spreading the virus.

While flu vaccination is still recommended for people who have not yet gotten vaccinated, antiviral drugs are an important second line of defense that can be used to treat flu illness. The CDC recommends the use of antiviral drugs as early as possible to treat flu illness in people who are very sick with flu and those at high risk of serious flu complications.

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The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year. The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. Getting the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available each year is best, although it is never too late in the flu season to get one. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against the flu. Influenza seasons are unpredictable and can begin as early as October and last through May.

You can also take some basic steps to protect yourself and family from getting flu and other respiratory infections. Make sure to wash your hands often, cover coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or a tissue, and stay home when you are sick.

Medical attention should be sought by people who are in a high risk group, or who are experiencing worsening symptoms. Besides older adults (over 65), young children and pregnant women, those with chronic diseases should contact their doctor or go to the ER soon after developing flu symptoms. This includes those who are impacted by diabetes, hypertension, asthma, congestive heart failure, active malignancy, and immune system deficiencies.

The following are signs that your body may not be able to fight off the flu on its own:

- Difficulty breathing, especially in those with a history of asthma or other respiratory disease
- Chest or stomach pain
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Severe vomiting
- High fever (over 102)
- Unable to drink enough fluids to stay hydrated

With sick children, look for additional signs and seek emergency medical treatment if:

- Their lips or skin appear bluish.
- They can't wake up or interact with you.
- They have a high fever with a rash.

Also go to the doctor or the ER for the flu if you seemed to be getting better, but find that your symptoms are returning. If your fever and cough roar back worse than before, you need to seek medical attention. The biggest concern is pneumonia, a serious threat especially for the elderly and those who have other health conditions. For further information please contact Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367.

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