



## Flu Spreads in California

It is not too late to get the flu vaccine

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

24 December 2019

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**Hollister, CA** –Flu activity continues to increase in California according the California Department of Health and Human Services (CDPH) adding to the concerns of health officials that flu season is in full swing affecting all parts of California. As of September 29, 2019, 39 people have died from the flu in California, including four children.

The holidays can add risk for influenza infection. Travel, combined with more social and family gatherings, can lead to increased opportunities to spread illness. Early testing of circulating influenza strains has shown that this season’s vaccine is protective against the majority of the flu strains present in our community.

“The severity of the flu season is always unpredictable”, said County Health Officer Dr. Marty Fenstersheib. “Therefore, getting vaccinated is still the best protection. We will not likely see a peak in the flu illnesses until well into January. I always get a flu shot to protect myself and others, like those around me who are elderly or the very young. The flu shot is safe and effective and can be lifesaving. A flu shot can’t give you flu, but could cause some mild soreness or a slight fever for a day or so.”

“I emphasize the importance of getting the flu shot,” said Dr. Fenstersheib, “and while flu vaccine is recommended for everyone six months and older, it is especially important for pregnant women, children younger than five, adults 65 and older, and those with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, asthma, and diabetes.”

Symptoms of the flu include a sudden onset of fever, cough, sore throat, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue. People at higher risk of severe disease who show flu symptoms should contact their medical provider. Medical providers may prescribe antiviral medications that reduce the severity and duration of illness. Antibiotics are not effective against the flu and those who are contagious with flu may be so even before they show symptoms.

Individuals are encouraged to contact their health care provider to get their flu shot. The vaccine is also available at Public Health Services, pharmacies and retail stores, and it is offered by some employers.

The CDPH recommends that all patients with suspected or confirmed influenza who are hospitalized, severely ill, or, at higher risk for complications should be treated with flu antiviral medication. Health officials recommend that people take the following additional steps to protect themselves and loved ones from the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, since hands may become contaminated with live influenza virus from surfaces that you touch.
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after you sneeze or cough.
- If you are sick, stay home from work or school until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours. Going to work or school while ill may pass the disease onto someone who is at risk for serious complications.

**San Benito County Public Health Services provides free flu shots.** For more information call San Benito County Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367 or go to the San Benito Public Health Services website: <http://hhsa.cosb.us/publichealth/>.

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