



Public Health Administration

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Health Advisory It's Not Too Late to Vaccinate

This Influenza season is expected to be severe. Those at higher risk of severe influenza who show flu symptoms should contact their medical provider immediately in order to get the most effective treatment. Symptoms include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue.

An annual flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age or older, but is particularly important for those at higher risk of severe influenza, including pregnant women, children under five years of age, the elderly, and persons with certain underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, obesity, asthma, and heart disease.

Influenza viruses are constantly changing – they can change from one season to the next or change within the course of the same season. This kind of gradual change is called “antigenic drift.”

“While this season’s vaccine’s ability to protect against drifted H3N2 virus may be reduced, we are still strongly recommending everyone get vaccinated,” says Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare, Health Officer. “Immunizations provided in past seasons against drifted viruses have still reduced the severity of disease or have helped to prevented new infections. In addition, immunization may offer protection against other flu viruses covered by the vaccine that could become more common later in the season.”

In addition to getting vaccinated, it is important to practice good hand washing and other good health habits. People who are ill should take actions to stop the spread of germs such as:

- While sick, limit contact with others
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Antiviral medications are an important line of defense against the flu and are especially important for people at higher risk of serious flu complication or people who are very sick.

- Treatment with antivirals work best when started within 48 hours of getting sick, but can still be beneficial when given later in the course of illness.
- Treatment with flu antiviral drugs can make the illness milder and shorter. Treatment with antivirals can also lessen the risk of being hospitalized or dying from flu.
- Three FDA-approved influenza antiviral agents are recommended for use in the United States during the 2014-2015 influenza season: oseltamivir (Tamiflu®), zanamivir (Relenza®) and peramivir (Rapivab®).

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For information about how antiviral medications can be used to prevent or treat influenza visit the CDC webpage at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/antivirals/index.htm>. Information for healthcare professionals can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/index.htm>

For information about clinic locations and times, please visit the DPH website at www.sbcounty.gov/dph, or call the Communicable Disease Section at 1-800-722-4794, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to find a location near you.