

Message from Sara H. Cody, M.D., Santa Clara County Health Officer Flu Update 12/12/14



Flu season has begun and the one thing that I can say for certain about the flu and flu season is that it's unpredictable. While flu virus spreads every year, the timing, severity, and length of the season varies from one season to another. Currently, flu activity is low in our community, but the flu typically peaks between December and February.

You may have heard that the predominant strain of flu virus this year has changed or "drifted". When these kinds of drifts have happened in the past, we have seen more hospitalizations due to flu, especially among older people, very young children, and persons with certain chronic medical conditions.

The current vaccine still provides some protection against the drifted strain and can help reduce severe illness that lead to missed days at work or school, hospitalization, or even death. The vaccine will also protect you against other influenza strains that are circulating in our community. So it is still a good idea to get your flu vaccine, and in fact, now is a great time to get vaccinated, before the holidays when many friends and family gather together.

Flu vaccinations are recommended for everyone 6 months of age and over, including healthy children and adults. It is especially important to get a flu vaccine if you are:

- 6 months through 18 years of age
- 50 years of age and older
- Pregnant or just had a baby
- Living in a nursing home or long-term care home
- Living with a weakened immune system or chronic medical condition (obesity, diabetes, heart or lung disease)
- Living with or caring for someone who is more likely to have flu complications
- A healthcare provider

Most physician offices, clinics, and pharmacies offer flu vaccinations. Be sure to get your flu shot now, to protect yourself and your loved ones against the flu.

In addition to getting vaccinated, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people, washing your hands often, and coughing or sneezing into your elbow or sleeve to reduce the spread of germs. Importantly, if you are feeling ill, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading the flu to others. Lastly, go to your medical provider within the first days of being ill to get anti-flu prescription medicine (Tamiflu or Relenza); this is important for people with certain chronic medical conditions and to shorten the duration and severity of illness.

Let's all work together to make this flu season as healthy and safe as possible for everyone.

For more information please visit:

[Santa Clara County Public Health Department](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch](#)