

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department

Health Officer
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HEALTH ADVISORY: First Flu Death of the Season in Santa Clara County and California

DATE: November 4, 2015

TO: Physicians, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, Infection Control, Hospitals, and Clinics

FROM: Sara H. Cody, MD
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Communicable Disease Controller

The first flu death of the 2015–16 influenza season in California has been recorded in Santa Clara County. The deceased was an adult under 65 years of age who had underlying chronic medical conditions and had not received their flu vaccine this year. This individual tested positive for influenza A by rapid flu test; they fell ill in October, were hospitalized in intensive care, and died from respiratory failure.

The 2015–16 influenza season is underway in California; as of last week the California Department of Public Health characterized overall influenza activity in the state as “sporadic” (for weekly state updates, see [http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/pages/influenza\(flu\).aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/healthinfo/discond/pages/influenza(flu).aspx)). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the predominant influenza subtype circulating nationally to date is influenza A H3N2 (Switzerland), the same as in last year’s flu season; this strain is new in this year’s flu vaccine (for weekly national updates from the CDC, see www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly). To date, circulating flu viruses remain susceptible to oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza).

Clinicians are requested to:

- Vaccinate:**
 - This year’s vaccine appears to be well-matched to the predominant circulating flu strains. The CDC recommends vaccinating all individuals over 6 months of age.
 - High priority groups for vaccination include children under 5 years of age, adults over 65 years of age, pregnant women, residents of nursing homes or long-term care facilities, and individuals with chronic medical conditions (including diabetes, heart disease, asthma, COPD, weakened immunity, etc.)
- Treat:** Rapidly treat all hospitalized flu patients with a neuraminidase inhibitor (e.g. oseltamivir or zanamivir), as well as all flu patients at high risk for complications. Do not wait for test results.
- Educate:** Ensure that all staff practice proper respiratory etiquette by coughing/sneezing into their elbows or sleeves, washing hands frequently, and staying home if ill. Use posters as reminders.
- Report:** Report all severe flu cases requiring ICU care, deaths in anyone <65 years, and flu outbreaks among any age, by phone 408-885-4214 or by faxed CMR <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/sccphd/en-us/FindForms/Pages/DRForms.aspx>

For more information, including weekly Santa Clara County flu reports, visit www.sccphd.org/diseases and click on Influenza or call the Santa Clara County Public Health Department at 408-885-4214.

Health ALERT: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health ADVISORY: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health UPDATE: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.