

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department



Health Officer
976 Lenzen Avenue, 2nd Floor
San José, CA 95126

HEALTH ALERT: Peak Influenza Season in Santa Clara County and California

DATE: January 14, 2015

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

FROM: Sara H. Cody, MD
Health Officer

George S. Han, MD, MPH
Communicable Disease Controller

The influenza season is at its peak nationwide, and it is on the rise in California. In Santa Clara County, we are entering the peak weeks of the flu season. To date, the county has registered five cases of severe flu requiring ICU care in individuals <65 years of age, including one in a child; four of these cases occurred within the past week. Also within the past week, six flu outbreaks have been reported in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities across the county. Local hospitals, along with our county's syndromic surveillance system, report accelerating increases in visits for influenza-like illness to emergency departments since late December.

Almost all the circulating influenza this season—nationally, statewide, and locally—is influenza A (H3N2). Flu seasons dominated by H3 strains in the past have been associated with increased hospitalizations and deaths. Furthermore, based on national data, approximately one-third of the H3N2 strains circulating this season match the H3N2 strain included in this year's influenza vaccine, while two-thirds do not. No resistance to neuraminidase inhibitors such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) has been detected this season.

Clinicians are requested to:

1. Vaccinate

- Although this year's vaccine is not well-matched to the predominant flu strain this year, the CDC still recommends vaccinating all individuals over 6 months of age. The vaccine may still confer some protection (although reduced) against the predominant strain, as well as protect against remaining circulating strains that are well-matched.
- High priority groups for vaccination include children <5 years, adults >65 years, pregnant women with each pregnancy, residents of nursing homes/long-term care facilities, and individuals with certain chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, obesity, etc.).

2. 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. Refer to the recent January 9 CDC update (emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00375.asp).

3. Educate

- Ensure that all staff practice proper respiratory etiquette by coughing/sneezing into their sleeves, washing hands frequently, and staying home if ill. Use posters as reminders.
- Remind patients and their families about ways to prevent the spread of flu, and refer them to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department website (www.sccphd.org) for more info.

4. Report

severe flu cases and deaths in anyone <65 years, or flu outbreaks in any age, by phone 408-885-4214 or by faxed CMR (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.