



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2014
PH14-004

CONTACT: Anita Gore
Heather Bourbeau
(916) 440-7259

Increase in Flu Activity is Reported
State Health Officer Urges Flu Vaccination before Peak Season

SACRAMENTO – Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and state health officer, says while we are seeing an increase in flu activity in California it is not an unexpected increase, nor is it too late to get vaccinated against the flu.

"California is seeing an accelerated increase in flu activity over the past few weeks," said Dr. Chapman. "You can help prevent further spread of the flu by getting a flu shot."

While influenza activity varies from year to year and is unpredictable, California generally sees an increase in cases in late December or early January and it often peaks in February or March. According to CDPH surveillance indicators, influenza activity in California is beginning to show a steady increase and is now considered to be widespread. Currently, there are more hospitalizations at this point than expected, based on historical trends.

For the most recent reporting period, there have been seven confirmed influenza deaths in persons under 65 years of age reported to CDPH. Twenty-eight more deaths are under investigation. Influenza deaths in persons 65 years of age and older are not reportable in California. The H1N1 strain appears to be the predominant strain so far this flu season and is one that is contained in the current flu vaccine.

"The best defense against the flu is getting vaccinated. This year's vaccine is an excellent match against this year's influenza strains," Dr. Chapman says. "There is no shortage of vaccine in California and it is not too late to get vaccinated. Our flu season may not peak for several more weeks, so I encourage everyone to get vaccinated to protect not only themselves, but those with whom they come into contact." Vaccination is recommended for everyone over six months old, but is particularly important for those persons at higher risk of severe influenza, like pregnant women, an obese person and persons with certain underlying medical conditions.

Dr. Chapman also notes that in addition to getting vaccinated, it's 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 rub
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Those at highest risk - the elderly, pregnant women, infants, or those with other health conditions - who show flu symptoms should contact their physician 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.

Visit a [flu vaccine location near you](#) to get immunized. Some local health departments may also offer free or low-cost immunizations.

For more information on influenza and other respiratory disease surveillance reports visit: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/statistics/Pages/CISPDataArchive.aspx>.

www.cdph.ca.gov

