

County of Santa Clara

Public Health Department

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



HEALTH ALERT: Widespread Influenza Activity in Santa Clara County and California

DATE: January 6, 2017

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

Influenza activity is increasing nationwide, and it has been widespread in California since late December. Santa Clara County is also experiencing markedly elevated flu activity. To date, ten cases of severe flu requiring intensive care in individuals <65 years of age, and seven outbreaks in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, have been reported. Local hospitals, along with Santa Clara County's syndromic surveillance system, have reported sharp increases in visits for influenza-like illness to emergency departments since late December.

The predominant strain of influenza circulating this season—nationally, statewide, and locally—is influenza A (H3N2). Flu seasons dominated by H3 strains have historically been associated with increased hospitalizations and deaths. To date, it appears that most of the circulating H3N2 viruses match the H3N2 component of this year's influenza vaccine. No resistance to neuraminidase inhibitors such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) has been detected this season.

Clinicians are requested to:

1. Vaccinate

- It is not too late to vaccinate! Continue to offer flu vaccine to all individuals over 6 months of age, including pregnant women, throughout the flu season.
- Only injectable flu vaccines are recommended this flu season.
- 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.

3. Educate

- Ensure that all staff stay home if ill, as well as practice proper respiratory etiquette by coughing/sneezing into their sleeves and washing hands frequently. 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 deaths and severe flu cases requiring intensive care in anyone <65 years, as well as 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**. National flu reports are updated weekly at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly>.

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.