

P.O. Box 2009 • 1601 East Hazelton Ave. • Stockton, CA 95201-2009
phone (209) 468.3411 • fax (209) 468.3823 • www.sjcphs.org

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CONTACT for this Release:

Krista Dommer

Office Phone: (209) 468-3571

Email: kdommer@sjcphs.org

Karen Furst, M.D.
Public Health Officer

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE RESIDENTS: CONTINUE TAKING ACTIONS TO PROTECT AGAINST INFLUENZA TWO SIMPLE AND IMPORTANT ACTIONS TO TAKE NOW

STOCKTON, CA (January 17, 2013) – While the wave of influenza (flu) activity has been widespread this year across much of the United States, in California and San Joaquin County influenza activity is still classified as regional. However, surveillance reports from the California Department of Public Health are now showing an increase in influenza activity in this state. Also, cases of influenza are starting to climb and will continue to increase over the coming weeks in San Joaquin County. Influenza viruses can cause serious illness and even death. County Health Officer, Dr. Karen Furst, recommends taking two simple, but crucial actions to decrease your chance of getting influenza, and to stop the spread of flu if you or those around you have symptoms.

1. Get Vaccinated to Decrease Your Risk - “Vaccination is proven to be the best way to help prevent influenza and its complications,” advises Dr. Furst. Since it takes up to two weeks after vaccination for full immunity to take effect; anyone who has not already been vaccinated should do so now. Don’t delay, vaccinate today!

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recommends everyone 6 months of age and older be immunized.
- If you do not have a regular medical provider or cannot get influenza vaccine from your healthcare provider, vaccine is available through many clinics, pharmacies as well as the Public Health Services (PHS) clinics. Sites offering flu vaccine near you can be found on the website, www.flu.gov.
- At the PHS clinics in Lodi, Manteca and Stockton, influenza vaccine is available during regular Immunization hours for a small fee; but no one will be denied services for inability to pay. For the PHS Clinic schedules, visit the San Joaquin County Public Health Services website at www.sjcphs.org or call 1-800-839-4949.

2. Stop the Spread of Flu Germs and Symptoms

- People with flu can spread the virus to others up to 6 feet away when they cough and sneeze; so always cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your arm.
- After coughing or sneezing, always clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Wash hands frequently.
- Flu germs can live on both dry and wet surfaces. To prevent the spread of the flu, keep surfaces (e.g., bathroom sinks, bedside tables, kitchen counters, phones, computers and toys) clean with a disinfectant.

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- If you have flu-like symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue), avoid close contact with others and stay home from work or school until at least 24 hours after the fever has gone.

San Joaquin County Public Health Services Ongoing Flu Prevention Efforts:

In San Joaquin County, PHS continues to:

- Work with the medical provider community and schools to monitor for influenza-like-illness and to test for the strains of seasonal influenza virus.
- Partner with the county's public school districts on a flu immunization program for children and families. In many districts, school nurses administer the immunizations to children whose parents have consented in advance. The immunization doses are provided free of charge by the California Department of Public Health. This year over 22,400 children and family members in San Joaquin County have been immunized through school districts. "The research shows that when children are immunized against the flu, it protects the whole community," states Dr. Furst.
- Provide and distribute flu vaccine at the PHS clinics and certain community organizations for hard to reach populations.
- Work with local hospitals and skilled nursing facilities to increase the percentage of health care workers in their facilities who receive a seasonal influenza vaccine.
- Distribute information promoting flu vaccination and other preventive practices to the public through the media and community and faith-based organizations.

For more information about seasonal influenza and the benefits of vaccination, visit the websites below:

- San Joaquin County Public Health Services, www.sjcphs.org
- California Department of Public Health, www.cdph.ca.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>
- Flu.gov, www.flu.gov

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Attachment: ["Flu Season Is Here – Get Vaccinated Today"](#)