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PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO TAKE ACTION NOW TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND OTHERS AGAINST THE UPCOMING INFLUENZA SEASON

STOCKTON, CA (October 5, 2011) – Studies from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), show that vaccination is the best way to help prevent influenza and its complications. San Joaquin County Public Health Officer, Dr. Karen Furst, further emphasizes, “The influenza vaccine is safe, effective, and readily available for the 2011-2012 influenza season. Now is a good time to get the vaccine because it takes 2 to 4 weeks to build up immunity.”

The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older receive the influenza vaccine every year to provide protection for the upcoming flu season. Influenza can be especially severe for infants under 12 months of age, pregnant women, the elderly, persons who are immunocompromised and those with underlying medical conditions. Dr. Furst urges all pregnant women to get the seasonal flu vaccine, as they are at high risk for being hospitalized if they get influenza. This vaccine is safe to get in any trimester of pregnancy. All household members and close contacts of pregnant women or infants are also encouraged to get vaccinated.

Follow these steps to protect yourself and others from getting the flu:

1. Get Vaccinated to Decrease Your Risk – Flu vaccine is available through many private doctors and clinics. If you do not have a regular medical provider or cannot get flu vaccine from your healthcare provider, vaccine is also available at many pharmacies as well as the Public Health Services (PHS) clinics. Sites offering flu vaccine near you can be found at www.flu.gov/wherelyoulive. At the PHS clinics in Lodi, Manteca and Stockton, flu vaccine is available during regular immunization hours for a small fee; but no one will be denied services for inability to pay. Visit the San Joaquin County PHS website www.sjcphs.org for the PHS Clinic schedule.
2. Stop the Spread of Flu Symptoms: a) Always cough or sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your arm; b) After coughing or sneezing, always clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; c) Flu germs can live on both dry and wet surfaces! To prevent the spread of the flu, keep surfaces in the bathroom, bedside tables, kitchen counters, phones and toys clean with a household disinfectant; and d) If you have flu like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue), avoid close contact with others and stay home from work or school.

For more information about seasonal influenza and the benefits of vaccination, visit the California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch website at

[www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Influenza\(Flu\).aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/Influenza(Flu).aspx), and/or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, www.cdc.gov/flu. ###