



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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CONTACT: [Anita Gore](#)
[Orville Thomas](#)
(916) 440-7259

Flu Vaccine Best Way to Keep the Holidays Flu-Free

SACRAMENTO - California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith is reminding anyone who hasn't yet received a flu vaccine to do so in time for the holidays.

"The holiday season is a time to enjoy getting together with friends and family," Dr. Smith said. "Unfortunately, it's also often when many people catch the flu. Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself against influenza and to protect those around you as well. Don't let the flu ruin your holidays."

In the United States, flu activity is usually highest between December and February and can continue into May. As long as flu viruses are circulating, it's not too late to get vaccinated.

Flu vaccine is available now. Once administered, it takes the vaccine up to two weeks to fully protect you against the flu. An influenza vaccine is especially important for pregnant women and other people at higher risk for severe influenza.

Each year, flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands or sometimes tens of thousands of deaths in the United States. To reduce this threat, CDPH recommends the annual flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older, including pregnant women.

Two of this season's vaccine components, the influenza A (H3N2) and influenza B (Yamagata lineage) strains, have been updated to match the viruses Californians are facing this flu season.

Flu can cause severe disease across all ages. According to the recently published [California influenza surveillance report](#), there were 78 influenza-associated deaths reported in persons under 65 years of age in California during the 2014-15 influenza season. Two Californians younger than 65 years of age have already lost their lives due to the flu or its complications in this current influenza season.

Common symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, chills, fatigue or body aches. Children may also have nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

CDPH also encourages people to protect their health by eating a nutritious diet, getting enough sleep and not smoking. People who feel they may have influenza should contact their physician.

To stop the spread of flu and other respiratory illnesses, Californians should also:

- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue and throw away the used tissue
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Dr. Smith encourages Californians to contact their health care provider, physician's office, clinic or pharmacy about obtaining the flu vaccine. Some local health departments may also offer low- or no-cost flu immunizations. For more information about the flu visit the [CDPH influenza web page](#). To find a flu vaccine location near you, visit www.flu.gov.

www.cdph.ca.gov

