



Public Health Division

# County of Santa Cruz

## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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## Press Release

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### **PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE IT'S TIME TO GET VACCINATED FOR THE FLU**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY - The County of Santa Cruz Public Health urges everyone six months and older to get vaccinated early before the virus starts going around. The flu vaccine helps stop the spread of the flu and protects everyone's health. The start of the flu season is unpredictable, and the vaccine takes two weeks to become fully effective.

Vaccines are available at doctors' offices, and many pharmacies provide free and low-cost flu vaccinations to the public.

"Flu shots are the best way to protect yourself, your family, and the community from becoming seriously ill with the flu," said County Health Officer, Dr. Gail Newel.

It is important to get the flu vaccine every year because flu strains change over time. Timely flu shots help prevent a disease that hospitalizes hundreds of thousands and kills tens of thousands of Americans every year. Last week, Santa Clara Public Health reported two flu deaths in people under 65 years old.

"Vaccination not only reduces the risk of catching the flu, it also reduces the chance that you'll be hospitalized," said Chief of Public Health, Jennifer Herrera. "Even if it is not a perfect match for all of this year's flu strains, the flu vaccine will provide some protection and reduce your chances of needing to be hospitalized if you do get sick."

In most cases, people should not visit the emergency room for flu symptoms but may call their healthcare provider. People who experience symptoms should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever goes away. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue.

Help stop the spread of germs by practicing good hand washing and health habits:

- Limit your contact with others and stay home from work or school if you are ill
- If you don't have a tissue to cough or sneeze into, cover your nose and mouth with your elbow or arm
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based rub
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

Certain groups may experience complications from the flu and should contact their healthcare provider promptly if they develop flu symptoms. These groups include pregnant women, children younger than five years old, adults 65 and older, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, asthma, and diabetes. Healthcare providers can prescribe antiviral medications that reduce the severity and duration of illness. Anyone who is very sick should go to the emergency room for treatment.

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Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Santa Cruz County**