



Office of Communications

Public Health News

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Los Angeles County Health Officials Urge Residents To Receive Flu Vaccination

There is still time and vaccine available; increase in flu-like symptoms recorded
throughout LA County

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles County public health officials announced an increase in flu-like symptoms being seen in local hospitals over the past two weeks, especially among children one to five years of age. These influenza-like illnesses include symptoms such as fever, congestion, sneezing, sore throat, runny nose, and cough.

“Although we are not reporting a definite flu outbreak today, increase in flu-like symptoms are a timely reminder to get immunized before the flu season reaches its peak,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Public Health Director and Health Officer. “The slight but steady increases in the number of adults and children sick with flu-like symptoms over the past couple weeks indicates that it is time to alert the public to be ever vigilant to protect their health and the health of their loved ones against the flu.”

Los Angeles County is also seeing an increase in respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) among infants. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), RSV is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia among infants and children under one year of age.

Health care providers are reminded to consider flu in patients that present with compatible symptoms and to encourage patients to practice frequent hand-washing and proper cough etiquette. The flu can also be prevented or its severity minimized by vaccination.

“It is not too late to get a flu shot,” says Laurene Mascola, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health’s Acute Communicable Disease Control unit. “The supply of flu vaccine is plentiful and procrastinators can still find protection in advance of a likely continued increase in flu activity.”

Although most people think of autumn as the best time of the year to get their flu shot, the vaccine is actually recommended throughout the flu season, which typically runs through mid-May. Flu vaccination can prevent the flu or reduce its complications but only in persons who receive it before they are exposed to the virus.

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“You do not have to be in a high-risk group to get the flu shot this time of year,” says A. Nelson El Amin, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Los Angeles County Immunization Program. “Anyone 6 months of age and up, who wants to avoid getting the flu or its complications and who does not have a medical condition against the flu vaccine, should get a flu shot. It is not too late.”

According to the CDC, influenza accounts for more than 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths in the United States on average each year. Receiving the flu shot is the most effective way to prevent the flu and its complications.

Los Angeles County residents are urged to contact their regular provider of health care to arrange for a vaccination against the flu. Persons who do not have a regular health care provider or who are otherwise unable to obtain the vaccine may contact their local public health center. For information regarding the hours and locations of Los Angeles County Public Health Centers and other clinics that offer flu vaccination, visit www.lapublichealth.org or call the Los Angeles County Information Line: 211.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the more than 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control and community and family health and comprises more than 3,800 employees with an annual budget exceeding \$650 million.

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