



Calaveras Health and Human Services Agency

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[San Andreas, CA – Public Health Services]

The Flu Peak is Approaching

Health Officials Urge Flu Vaccination

Dean Kelaita, MD, local health officer of Calaveras County, says that while we are seeing an increase in flu activity in Calaveras County, it is not too late to get vaccinated against the flu.

So far this season, influenza A H3N2 viruses have been most common. For comparison, in the 2012-2013, 2007-2008, and 2003-2004 seasons H3N2 strains predominated and had the highest seasonal mortality levels of the past decade.

Roughly half of the season's H3N2 viruses that have been analyzed are 'drifted' with antigenic differences from this season's vaccine H3N2 virus. The vaccine's ability to prevent infection with drifted H3N2 virus may be diminished.

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“While the vaccine’s ability to protect against drifted H3N2 viruses this season may be reduced, we are still strongly recommending everyone to get vaccinated,” said Dean Kelaita, MD. “Immunizations given in past seasons against drifted viruses have still reduced the severity of disease or prevented many infections. In addition, immunization will offer protection against other flu viruses covered by the vaccine that may become more common later in the season.”

Depending on the formulation, flu vaccines protect against three or four different flu viruses. Even during a season when the vaccine is only partially protective against one flu virus, it can protect against the others.

According to the most recent reports, influenza activity in Calaveras County, as well as California as a whole, is beginning to show a steady increase.

Influenza deaths and ICU admissions in persons 65 years of age and older are not reportable in California.

Dean Kelaita, MD, also notes that in addition to getting vaccinated, it's important to practice good hand washing and other good health habits. People who are ill should take actions to stop the spread of germs such as:

- While sick, limit contact with others
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based rub
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months of age or older, but is particularly important for those at higher risk of severe influenza, including pregnant women, children under five years of age, the elderly, and persons with certain underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, obesity, asthma, and heart disease. Vaccination of pregnant women also helps to protect infants too young to be vaccinated.

This flu season is expected to be severe. Those at highest risk who show flu symptoms should contact their physician immediately in order to get the most effective treatment. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue.

Calaveras Public Health Services is offering free or low-cost immunizations on Mondays 3-5:30 pm and Thursdays 8-12.

Contact Calaveras Public Health at 209-754-6460 for more information.

For additional information about influenza, visit www.flu.gov.

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