

### Santa Clara County H1N1 Flu Update

October 1, 2009

As you may know, pandemic influenza (flu) is a world-wide outbreak caused by a new flu virus. Because this H1N1 virus is a new flu strain **and** people have little or no immunity **and** it has spread world-wide, it has been declared a pandemic. At this time the virus seems to be no more severe than what is normally experienced with seasonal flu. But even if this virus does not become more severe, it will infect larger numbers of people, more than we typically see with seasonal flu.

On September 29, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors declared a local emergency in response to the pandemic H1N1 virus. The declaration supports the Public Health Department's response to pandemic H1N1 flu in our community, it makes it possible to redirect and gather additional resources to protect the health of Santa Clara County residents. The Board's action included allocating \$500,000 in funds for flu emergency response efforts.

October is the beginning of the flu season and flu strains are circulating in our community – both seasonal flu strains and the pandemic H1N1 flu. The symptoms of seasonal flu and pandemic H1N1 flu are similar. Symptoms include fever plus other symptoms such as cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Many people with the pandemic H1N1 flu, especially children, also have diarrhea and vomiting. It is important to remember most people who get sick with the pandemic H1N1 flu will get better without any medical attention and will recover at home.

Currently, human cases of flu have been increasing in the United States, including more than 2,000 reported cases of pandemic H1N1 in California. As of October 1<sup>st</sup>, there have been 159 hospitalized cases and 9 deaths attributed to H1N1 in Santa Clara County. The majority of these patients had underlying medical conditions.

#### Response and Planning

The overall response to the upcoming flu season will be challenging for the entire community. There will be particular challenges for the Public Health Department, hospitals and clinics, and the medical community. The Public Health Department, working with the entire Health & Hospital System and other partners, has organized the work at-hand into three major areas:

**1. Surveillance, epidemiology and laboratory testing.** The Public Health Department continues to receive and monitor reports of pandemic H1N1 infections, especially in populations at highest risk. The Public Health Department staff continues to investigate outbreaks and clusters of reported flu infections in settings where people gather together, all across our community.

#### **2. Medical Intervention & Vaccination.**

H1N1 vaccine manufacturers will eventually produce enough vaccine to meet the nation's need. But at first, vaccine supplies will be limited. The Public Health Department is working with the local medical community on the distribution of the H1N1 vaccine to local medical providers.



The department will also run several targeted vaccination clinics for people who do not have access to a medical provider and are at-risk for illness or serious illness.

The federal government has set priorities for those at highest risk for illness or for serious complications from H1N1:

- Pregnant women;
- People who live with or provide care for infants under 6 months;
- Healthcare and emergency medical services workers;
- Children and young adults between the ages of 6 months to 24 years of age; and
- People from 25 – 64 years old **who have medical conditions** that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications.

**3. Risk Communication and Community Information.** Good information and clear messages will be critical in preparing the public for the potential impact of pandemic H1N1 flu. Because pandemic H1N1 is striking our school-age population, staff is working with school districts and has recently launched a H1N1 student awareness and education campaign. While this age group is a focus of these educational efforts, other information and tools will be made available for the parents of all school-age children and the Santa Clara County community at-large.

The emphasis of early communication activities will include information about preparing for this potential public health emergency, and how important it is that each and every one of us do all that we can to limit the spread of this disease – at work and at home.

### What You Can Do

It is important to remember that most of the people who have been sick with pandemic H1N1 flu, have been taken care of at home and have fully recovered without any special medical attention.

If you do get the flu or have flu-like symptoms, it is important to stay home until you no longer have fever for at least 24 hours (after you stopped taking medication). The exception is people working in the healthcare setting, for them the period of time to stay home will be for 7 days from the time symptoms began, or until 24 hours after symptoms have stopped, whichever is longer.

Because so many people may become sick with this new flu virus, each individual and family should prepare and have the supplies they may need. As we saw during in the spring, pandemic influenza can have an affect on everyday life. Schools may have to be closed again, business may experience high absenteeism, and there may be spot shortages of supplies. Have a plan for yourself and your family in case any of these things happen. By preparing now, you can help protect yourself and your family later. Go to [www.sccphd.org](http://www.sccphd.org) and look for the Home Care Guide for the information you need to prepare at home.

It will be important to stay informed. Information about prevention and control actions will be shared in a number of ways. Visit the Public Health Department's web site at [www.sccphd.org](http://www.sccphd.org) and by the CDC at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) for the latest. On the Public Health Department site you can now subscribe to the e-newsletter which will send new information about H1N1 and other Public Health Department activities as it becomes available.