What’s up with the Flu this Year?

Influenza is widespread nationally, in all but 8 states and the District of Columbia. California is one of the 8 states. In Santa Barbara County, we have not seen an increase in flu at this time. Colds and respiratory illness are being seen at high levels in our community which may look like influenza.

Takashi Wada, MD, MPH, will be making a brief presentation at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, January 15, 2013. He will speak during public comment, shortly after 9:00 am. He will discuss what is happening with influenza nationally, in California and locally. Dr. Wada will also talk about the availability of vaccine, the match of the vaccine to the flu strains seen this year, who should get vaccinated and danger signs for serious flu illness.

Flu season started early this season in most parts of the country. There have been high levels reported in numerous states. Although Santa Barbara County flu levels are somewhat lower than what we saw last year at this time, we have seen an increase in reports since the end of December.

Flu season typically runs through spring. It is possible that our community will see an increase over the next few months. It is recommended that everyone take the following steps to stop the spread of influenza:

- Get a flu vaccine if you have not done so
- Stay home if sick
- Use good hand hygiene
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- It takes a couple a of weeks after receiving the vaccine before it becomes fully effective

For more information, go to [http://www.countyofsb.org/phd/iz.aspx?id=22032](http://www.countyofsb.org/phd/iz.aspx?id=22032) or the Public Health Department website under Immunization Project.

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