National Influenza Vaccination Week: December 7-13, 2014

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is joining with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in observing National Influenza Vaccination Week December 7 – 13, 2014. The CDC established this week to highlight the importance of continuing flu vaccination through the holiday season and beyond.

For millions of people every season, the flu can mean a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue, and miserable days spent in bed. However, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized in the United States from flu complications each year. The flu also can be deadly. Over a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2006, estimates of yearly flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people during the most severe season.

Every year, flu spreads across the country, from person to person, family to family, and community to community. An annual flu vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu. While how well the vaccine works can vary, the benefits from vaccination are well documented. Studies show that flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations and deaths. Health experts across the country recommend that everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine. Yearly flu vaccination should begin as soon as vaccine is available, and should continue throughout the flu season which can last as late as May.

Some people are at high risk for serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia, that can lead to hospitalization and even death. This includes young children, pregnant women, people 65 and older and people with certain medical conditions, like asthma, diabetes or heart disease. For those at high risk for complications, getting the flu vaccine is especially important. It’s also important to get the vaccine if you care for anyone at high risk, including babies younger than 6 months because they are too young to get the vaccine.

Getting a flu vaccine is more convenient than ever before. Vaccines are available from your doctor and at many retail pharmacies. Many employers, schools, colleges and universities also offer flu vaccines. So when you’re out and about in your community and see signs offering flu shots, or when you visit your doctor for a routine check-up, remember: the flu vaccine is the single best way to prevent the flu. You can also find a flu vaccination clinic near you with the vaccine finder at http://vaccine.healthmap.org/.

Flu shots are covered by Medicare and by most insurance plans. Please check with your insurance provider for coverage details.

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