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## **P R E S S R E L E A S E**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Rapid Influenza Spike in California; Public Health Urges Community to get Vaccinated**

SANTA BARBARA, Ca – A steep increase in influenza activity has been recorded in California over the past 3 weeks. Although January and February are typically the peak of influenza season, the rapid increase is unusual. An alarming increase in influenza outbreak in healthcare facilities, particularly skilled nursing facilities, has been reported.

The severity of illness this year has also increased. This is due to the predominant circulating strain, Influenza A / H3N2, which typically causes more severe disease particularly in the elderly and immunocompromised. The good news is the current influenza vaccine is a good match for circulating strains and community members can still get vaccinated.

Early treatment of hospitalized influenza patients can reduce the severity of illness. The benefit of treating with oseltamivir, and anti-viral medication, is greatest when the medication is started immediately after symptom onset. No resistance to this medication has been reported in California. Individuals who believe they may have the flu should seek medical care if they have underlying health conditions which predispose them to more severe illness. There is an adequate national and state supply of both the vaccine and the anti-viral medication. Additional influenza vaccines are still available for clinics who administer them, including the Vaccines for Children (VFC) providers.

Community members can take important steps to prevent influenza illness and outbreaks. All persons aged 6 months and over are encouraged to get vaccinated. Persons who are ill should stay home and have minimal contact with others, particularly those who have chronic health problems and are at increased risk for severe disease. Those who work in schools and healthcare facilities should practice frequent handwashing and avoid touching their faces and mouth.

For more information about flu, visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

To find flu vaccine near you, visit: <http://flushot.healthmap.org/>

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