



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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COMMUNICABLE DISEASE UNIT

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT INFLUENZA ACTIVITY

To:	All Healthcare Providers
From:	Lisa B. Hernandez, MD, MPH, Health Officer, Santa Cruz County
Date:	Jan. 7, 2015
Release #:	2015FLU1-1

CURRENT SITUATION

Reports of confirmed influenza and influenza like illness (ILI) from Santa Cruz County Emergency Departments and Urgent Care facilities have increased significantly over the last week. Additionally, there have been several adults hospitalized with influenza. Information on the viral subtype for these cases is pending. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports widespread influenza activity in most states.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF ALL CLINICIANS

- **Encourage and facilitate influenza vaccination** for all persons 6 months of age and older and pneumococcal vaccination for those at increased risk of pneumococcal disease. This year's influenza vaccine may provide some protection against drifted influenza A(H3N2) strains and still is a good match for other circulating strains nationwide including A(pH1N1), non-drifted influenza A(H3N2) and influenza B.
- **Treat** patients with oseltamivir or zanamivir. Treat early and empirically, without relying on lab test results.
- **Report outbreaks** of ILI in residents of large group or institutional settings by calling the Communicable Disease Unit of the Santa Cruz County Public Health Department at 831-454-4114.
- **Report individual cases under the age of 65 years** who are hospitalized in the ICU with suspected or confirmed influenza and cases who have died under the age of 65 with suspected or confirmed influenza.
- **Implement infection control** precautions (see below).

INFECTION CONTROL PRECAUTIONS FOR HEALTHCARE SETTINGS

All healthcare settings should adopt standard and droplet precautions when caring for patients with ILI, or suspected or confirmed influenza infection. Specifically:

- Request that all persons with fever and cough wear a surgical face mask.

- Isolate unmasked patients with ILI as soon as possible, ideally in a private exam room or at a distance of at least three feet from others.
- The Health Officer has issued an order for all licensed healthcare facilities' staff to either be vaccinated against influenza or wear a mask for the duration of the flu season. Go to the following link for more information: <http://www.santacruzhealth.org/alerts/pdf/SCHSAHWCFlyOrder090414v2.pdf>
- Educate your patients about prevention actions such as hand washing, covering coughs and staying at home when ill.

INFLUENZA TESTING

For influenza testing, RT-PCR is recommended. Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Tests (RIDTs) may be useful when testing for influenza and can help guide acute clinical care decisions. However, due to the [limited sensitivities and predictive values of RIDTs](#), negative results of RIDTs do not exclude influenza virus infection in patients with signs and symptoms suggestive of influenza. Please go to the following web site for more information: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/clinician_guidance_ridt.htm .

The Public Health Laboratory at the Health Services Agency will accept influenza specimens on patients who are hospitalized in ICU or are part of an outbreak in an institution or facility for confirmation and subtyping.. These specimens will be tested at the regional Public Health Laboratory and, depending upon results, forwarded to the State for further identification. The specimen submission form for influenza specimen collection for Santa Cruz County provides directions and can be accessed at: <http://www.santacruzhealth.org/flu/PDFs/Severe%20Flu%20Lab%20Specimen%20Collection%20Form.pdf>

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action



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