



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

Dec. 22, 2004

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COUNTY OFFERS TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY DURING HOLIDAY SEASON

Cover Your Cough, Wash Hands, Stay Home if Ill to Prevent Spread of Colds and Flu

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) encourages holiday revelers to take steps to prevent the spread of flu and other infectious respiratory conditions this year.

"We've had a mild flu season so far, but flu typically peaks in January in San Diego, so we still encourage those who are eligible for flu vaccine to get a shot," said Nancy Bowen, M.D., San Diego County Public Health Officer.

Requirements regarding who can get a flu shot recently were changed, following a state order. New priority groups include: adults age 50 or older, emergency service workers, and all who have regular contact with those in high-risk priority groups. Others recommended to receive vaccine include: all children aged six - 23 months, individuals age two - 64 with underlying chronic medical conditions, women who will be pregnant during influenza season, residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities, children six months to 18 years of age on chronic aspirin therapy, out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children younger than six months of age, and healthcare workers providing direct patient care.

For those not in priority groups, Dr. Bowen recommends taking steps to help prevent spread of colds, flu and other respiratory illnesses:

- Remember to "Cover Your Cough." The tiny droplets expelled during coughing and sneezing can infect someone else. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or with a shirtsleeve if a tissue is not available.
- Wash hands frequently, for 20 seconds under warm water. If soap and water are not available, use antibacterial wipes or gels.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with hands.
- Avoid close contact with those who are ill. Conversely, those who have a cold or flu should not mingle with others. Flu typically lasts a week to 10 days.

This year so far, 12 positive tests have been reported to HHSA's Public Health Services, with one death due to pneumonia with flu as an underlying cause reported. For information on where to get flu vaccine, call the County Flu Hotline, (866) 358-2966 and Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) at (877) FLU-0202, or visit the CHIP Web site, www.sdchip.org.

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