



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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## **PREPARING FOR THE FLU—TIMES TWO**

### *Officials Announce Distribution Plans for Seasonal and H1N1 Flu Vaccines*

Bracing for two types of influenza this flu season, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and its many partners today officially kicked off a campaign to encourage the public to get vaccinated against the seasonal and H1N1 flu.

“The County of San Diego wants you to be ready. This year we are dealing with two types of flu: seasonal flu and H1N1 influenza,” said Supervisor Ron Roberts at a Flu Kick Off event at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreation Center in Skyline. “It is extremely important for people to plan ahead and educate themselves about both types of flu and get vaccinated against both.”

Organized by the San Diego Black Nurses Association, AARP, San Diego Metro Chapter 4916, the San Diego Immunization Coalition, and HHSA, the Flu Kick Off event was also attended by Dr. Dean Sidelinger, County Deputy Public Health Officer; Syvera Hardy from the San Diego Black Nurses Association; Dr. Josef B. Zwass, a pediatrician from Kaiser Permanente; Dr. William P. Hitchcock, a pediatrician with La Jolla Pediatrics and Dr. Mark Sawyer, Medical Director of the San Diego Immunization Partnership and a member of the San Diego Immunization Coalition.

During the event, about 300 area residents received the seasonal flu vaccine at no cost.

“For the past five years, the San Diego Black Nurses Association has held this event in southeastern San Diego in order to decrease the disparities in flu vaccination in these communities,” said Hardy.

The seasonal flu contributes to the death of about 36,000 individuals nationwide every year. During 2008-2009 flu season, there were two flu-related deaths in San Diego County; nine deaths were reported the year before. The highest number of flu-related deaths occurred in 2003-2004 when 22 deaths were reported locally.

The single most important action to protect against seasonal and H1N1 influenza is to get vaccinated. The seasonal flu vaccine is now available at some locations in San Diego County. The H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in mid-to-late October.

“We cannot emphasize enough the importance of getting your seasonal flu shot,” said Sidelinger. “Getting the vaccine against H1N1 is also extremely important because the majority of people do not have immunity against this flu.”

H1N1 influenza was detected in San Diego County this spring. It has never left the region and continues to be widespread throughout the county.

The number of hospitalizations and deaths due to H1N1 influenza increased steadily through the summer. To date, there have been 284 H1N1 hospitalizations and 22 H1N1-related deaths. The number of H1N1-related deaths has now equaled the highest number of seasonal flu deaths ever reported in the county.

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According to the CDC, as many as 40 percent of Americans could contract the H1N1 virus this flu season.

It is especially important that people at higher risk for contracting H1N1 influenza get the vaccine when it arrives in San Diego County. These include pregnant women, caretakers of children under 6 months, children and adults up to 24 years of age, emergency healthcare workers, and people with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, heart disease or diabetes.

However, everyone should get the vaccine to receive immunity against the H1N1 virus. There is expected to be ample supply of the vaccine.

The Health and Human Services Agency is working closely with local agencies including school districts to determine the best way to deliver the H1N1 vaccine.

To date, 24 school districts have indicated an interest in delivering the vaccines at school sites.

Furthermore, about 450 health providers and businesses in the county have registered with the state to give the H1N1 vaccine at their facilities.

When the vaccine arrives in San Diego County, people will be able to get it through their primary care provider, retail pharmacy, community clinics and public health centers. HHSA is also considering doing mass vaccinations at different locations throughout the county.

In addition to getting the flu vaccine, there are other precautions people should take to prevent getting the H1N1 virus and seasonal influenza. People should:

- Wash hands thoroughly and often or use hand sanitizers
- Stay away from those who are sick
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth
- Routinely clean commonly touched surfaces

Also, if people are sick, they should stay home for 24 hours after fever is gone, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and avoid contact with others.

For more information about seasonal flu and vaccine locations, visit [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org) or call 2-1-1 San Diego. For the latest info on H1N1 influenza, visit [www.sdcountry.ca.gov](http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 2-1-1 San Diego.

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