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Los Angeles County Health Officials See Increase in Flu-like Illnesses

Flu-like illnesses have steadily increased in the past 4 weeks especially among children aged 1 – 5 and there is still time for vaccination

LOS ANGELES – Los Angeles County public health officials announce an increase in the flu and flu-like illnesses being seen in local hospital emergency rooms and doctor offices. Patients have been diagnosed with fever and respiratory symptoms.

“There is still time for those who have not gotten a flu shot to do so,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Public Health Director and Health Officer. “Although most people think of autumn as the best time of the year to get their flu shot, the vaccine is actually recommended throughout the flu season, which typically runs through mid-May.

“This is also a good reminder to practice good hygiene including covering your mouth when you cough, washing your hands regularly, and most importantly, getting the flu vaccine.”

Health care providers are reminded to consider flu in patients that present a fever and/or respiratory symptoms and to encourage patients to practice frequent hand-washing and proper cough etiquette. The flu can also be prevented or its severity minimized by vaccination.

“It is important too, for people who think they are sick with the flu to follow-up with their regular health care provider or neighborhood health clinic instead of overwhelming emergency rooms,” said Laurene Mascola, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health’s Acute Communicable Disease Control unit. “So far emergency rooms have not been dramatically impacted but we do not want to put additional strain on our current system.”

According to the CDC, influenza accounts for more than 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths in the United States on average each year. Receiving the flu shot is the most effective way to prevent the flu and its complications.

Los Angeles County residents are urged to contact their regular provider of health care to arrange for a vaccination against the flu. Persons who do not have a regular health care provider or who are otherwise unable to obtain the vaccine may contact their local public health center. For information regarding the hours and locations of Los Angeles County Public Health Centers and other clinics that offer flu vaccination, visit www.lapublichealth.org or call the Los Angeles County Information Line: 211.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the more than 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control and community and family health and comprises more than 4,000 employees with an annual budget exceeding \$700 million.

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