



For immediate release

Nasty influenza season in full swing, residents can still get vaccine for protection

SAN ANTONIO (Jan. 10, 2013) – The influenza season is in full swing, earlier than usual. Compared to the same period last year, flu numbers doubled this season. Although flu seasons are unpredictable, it is likely a second wave of flu activity will peak in February. The San Antonio Metropolitan Health District recommends a three-step approach to protect yourself and others from the flu.

1. Get a flu vaccine
2. Wash hands often and maintain good hygiene to prevent the spread of germs
3. If you get the flu, complete all medication doses prescribed by your doctor and stay home from school or work to avoid infecting others

Local flu surveillance reports also show an increase of other respiratory viruses, such as Rhinovirus and RSV, but flu continues to be the most prevalent respiratory virus. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also reports an elevated proportion of visits to doctors for influenza-like illness in its latest national surveillance report.

Locally, there were no flu-related deaths reported in the past year. In Texas, however, there were three pediatric deaths reported this season. While flu activity typically peaks in February or March, this season the number of cases rose early and the cases tend to be more severe.

The flu vaccine takes up to two weeks after vaccination for the body's immune response to fully protect the person, so it's important to immunize now. Everyone over 6 months of age is recommended to get a flu vaccine each year. More than 127 million doses of flu vaccine were shipped to providers nationwide. There is currently no shortage of vaccine in the San Antonio and Bexar County area.

Nationwide, flu leads to an estimated 36,000 deaths and 200,000 hospitalizations each year. Some people are at greater risk of serious flu-related complications: children younger than five, but especially children younger than two-years old; persons 65 and older; pregnant women; and persons with chronic diseases.

Many doctors, clinics and retail pharmacies offer flu vaccine. To find the provider nearest you, visit <http://flushot.healthmap.org/> . Flu vaccination is also available at these Metro Health clinics:

Main Immunization Clinic, 345 W. Commerce, (210) 207-8894
Goodwill Clinic, 727 NW Loop 410 at Blanco, (210) 525-0059

For more information, call 207-8790 or visit <http://www.sanantonio.gov/health/>.