



**Calaveras County Public Health Department
San Andreas, California**

INFLUENZA [FLU] FACT SHEET

What is influenza?

Influenza is a contagious illness of the lungs that is caused by viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness. At times, it can lead to death. Some people are at high risk for serious complications if they are exposed to the virus. People over 50 years of age, very young children, and people with certain kinds of medical problems are at the greatest risk of complications.

How does influenza spread?

Influenza is spread by droplets that come from an infected person who coughs and sneezes. It usually spreads from person to person. Sometimes a person may get influenza by touching something with the virus on it and then touching his/her mouth or nose.

An infected person can spread the virus 1 day **before** getting symptoms and up to 7 days **after** getting sick. People infected with the virus should stay home as soon as they feel ill and limit contact with others who are at risk of serious complications if exposed.

What are the symptoms and complications of influenza?

Symptoms of influenza generally include:

- Fever, usually high
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose AND
- Muscle aches

Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are more common among children than adults.

Complications of influenza include:

- Pneumonia [bacterial]
- Dehydration
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions [congestive heart failure, asthma, diabetes]
- Sinus problems & ear infections in children

How can the spread of influenza be prevented?

The single best way to prevent influenza is to get the influenza vaccine every fall. October or November is the best time to get immunized. You can still get immunized in December or later. Influenza season can last through May each year. It takes about 2 weeks after you are immunized for antibodies to develop that protect against the virus.

Who should be immunized each year?

1. People at high risk for complications from the flu, including:

- Children aged 6 months until their 5th birthday
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities

2. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu (see above)
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)
- Healthcare workers

For more information about this fact sheet, contact the Public Health Department.