



For Immediate Release:

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LA County's First Influenza Case of the Season Confirmed Everyone Six Months of Age and Older Urged to Get Seasonal Flu Vaccine

LOS ANGELES – A man in his 30's is the first to be confirmed with locally acquired flu this year in Los Angeles County. The strain has been identified as Influenza A H3N2, which is circulating throughout the nation according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This is one of three flu strains, including H1N1, for which this year's flu vaccine will provide protection.

“This confirmed case marks the beginning of a flu season that can stretch from now until May of next year. Now is an excellent time to get your annual flu vaccine. The earlier you get your seasonal flu vaccine, the sooner you will be protected from the flu,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “We cannot predict how severe or how mild a flu season will be. Flu is a serious illness and should be treated as such. Ample vaccine is already available in LA County in a variety of locations, including pharmacies, supermarkets, community clinics and doctor's offices.”

Influenza accounts for up to 200,000 hospitalizations, and an average of 24,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the CDC. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, headache, and muscle ache within the first three to five days of illness.

“The flu can affect each person differently. Some individuals who get sick are able to treat themselves at home with over-the-counter medications, drinking plenty of fluids, resting and staying home from work or school. Others may develop severe symptoms requiring hospitalization, or may develop complications such as pneumonia,” said Dr. Fielding. “Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. We urge everyone, six months of age or older, to get either the flu shot or the nasal spray vaccine, and to practice basic hygiene, such as washing your hands, to prevent the spread of the flu.”

Residents are encouraged to contact their regular doctor for recommended vaccinations. Supermarkets, pharmacies and community clinics throughout the county are offering seasonal flu vaccine for a low fee. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health free flu vaccine clinics will begin operating near the end of October, and will be held throughout the county for those individuals without health insurance or another source of health care. Community outreaches, which will feature clinics offering free flu vaccine, will also begin near the end of October.

While influenza vaccine is now recommended for everyone (except infants under six months of age), it is especially important that certain groups make sure they are vaccinated because they are



either at greater risk of developing complications from the flu or because they live with or care for others who are at greater risk of developing complications. These groups are:

- Pregnant women;
- Children younger than five;
- Adults 50 years of age and older;
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes;
- People who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities;
- People who live with or care for those at high-risk for complications from the flu, including health care and day care workers.

Flu is extremely contagious. Everyone is urged to practice basic hygiene to help reduce the chances of catching either the flu or other illnesses. These healthy habits include:

- Washing your hands frequently, especially after using the restroom and before and after eating;
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze;
- Not touching your nose, mouth or eyes to prevent the spread of germs;
- Staying home from work or school when sick.

For information regarding low-cost flu vaccines through a health care organization or other vaccination clinic, visit the Public Health Immunization Program's website at <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip> or www.findaflushot.com. Or call the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone in the county.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 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. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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