

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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San Mateo County Health System

**Seasonal Flu Vaccine Now Widely Available in San Mateo County**

Health System recommends all residents ages 6 months and older get the 2011 flu shot

**SAN MATEO, Calif.** – Flu season is here and with new cases of the flu now confirmed, San Mateo County Health officials urge everyone ages 6 months and older to get a flu shot. Flu vaccine is now widely available throughout the county, and the Health Officer recommends that residents visit their healthcare providers early in the flu season to get vaccinated.

“The flu vaccine is the best defense against the flu,” said Dr. Scott Morrow, San Mateo County Health Officer. “Flu vaccine is safe and can prevent flu-related illness, and even death. This season, the vaccine will protect against three strains of flu. The virus mutates from year to year, which is why it’s important for people to get vaccinated every year.”

In addition to healthcare providers, retail stores and pharmacies, such as Costco and Walgreens, also have seasonal flu vaccine available. For people who do not have a healthcare provider, the Health System and partner organizations are now offering vaccine at clinics throughout the County. No appointment is necessary for these clinics, and no I.D. is required. Some clinics may request a small donation. Visit [www.smhealth.org/flu/vaccines](http://www.smhealth.org/flu/vaccines) for more information.

Flu season in California generally begins in October and peaks in late December through March. The timing and spread of the disease is unpredictable, and it takes about two weeks to gain protection after receiving a flu vaccination. For this reason, health officials urge getting vaccinated as early in the season as possible.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), five to twenty percent of the population gets the flu each year, resulting in more than 200,000 hospitalizations. Thousands of people die each year from flu complications. Flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting yourself, and those around you, against this potentially serious illness.

It is especially important that certain groups be vaccinated, such as pregnant women, children younger than five, adults 50 years and older, and people of any age with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes, and people who live with or care for those at high-risk for complications from the flu.

For more information about the flu, and for a schedule of Health System-sponsored vaccine clinics in San Mateo County, visit [www.smhealth.org/flu/vaccines](http://www.smhealth.org/flu/vaccines), or call (650) 573-3927.

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