



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Michael Hill *Health Agency Director*

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PROVIDER HEALTH UPDATE

Date: October 2, 2018

Contact: Christine Gaiger, PHN, Communicable Disease Program Manager
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Flu FAQs for Health Care Providers

When is the “flu season”?

Influenza activity begins to increase around October or November, peaks between December and February, and can last as late as May. The CDC defines influenza season as calendar weeks 40-20. The California Conference of Local Health Officers recommends using the dates of November 1-April 30 when issuing orders for influenza vaccination of health care workers in California. Flu season will likely begin soon.

How long is someone contagious after getting the flu?

To be considered no longer contagious, a person must be:

- (1) 24 hours fever-free without using fever-reducing medication, AND
- (2) At least seven days past the start date of their illness.

People often cough for a period of time after the flu because of damage and irritation to the respiratory system, but that does not necessarily mean that they are contagious. Some people, especially children, can shed virus longer than seven days.

Does taking Tamiflu or other flu prophylaxis mean that a person is less contagious?

No. Influenza treatment, such as Tamiflu, can help reduce symptoms of the flu. It can also be used as chemoprophylaxis to help protect someone from getting influenza during an outbreak. It might reduce how contagious a person is, but the results of research in this area are inconsistent. Therefore, it does not change our 24 hour / 7 day guidance above.

What kinds of precautions are required for a patient with influenza?

Per the CDC, “droplet recommendations should be implemented for patients with suspected or confirmed influenza for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of fever and respiratory symptoms, whichever is longer, while a patient is in a health care facility.” Patients should be placed in a private room or area.

Can a patient with documented influenza be transferred from the hospital to a skilled nursing facility or long-term care facility?

Yes. The patient should be placed in a private room or area and droplet precautions should be followed until the contagious period has ended, as described above. Please note that Tamiflu administration does not change this recommendation.

Public Health Department

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What is the best test for the flu?

Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) that can be done in the office have low sensitivity, meaning a negative result does not necessarily mean that the person does not have the flu. A confirmatory test should be done. Our Public Health Laboratory tests for Influenza A and B Viral RNA by RT-PCR, which is considered the gold standard for testing. Send all specimens to our Public Health Lab for testing!

Do my employees need to wear a mask when they take care of patients if they didn't get their flu shot?

Yes. See the attached statement from our San Luis Obispo County Health Officer regarding mandatory vaccination of health care workers. For more detail and recommendations on vaccination, masking, and overall management of influenza in health care settings, see www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/healthcaresettings.htm.

If you get the flu shot, how well will it protect you from getting the flu?

Studies show that influenza vaccine effectiveness is around 50 percent. In other words: if a patient has symptoms and tests positive for the flu, they are twice as likely to have **not** been vaccinated. Vaccine effectiveness is vaccine protection measured in the real world in observational studies. (This is different from "vaccine efficacy" which measures vaccine protection in randomized controlled trials under optimal conditions.)

If you do get the flu, will your illness likely be less severe if you received your influenza vaccine?

Yes. If you are one of the unlucky people who get a flu vaccine but still manage to get the flu, you will most likely have a more mild illness. Studies have also shown lower rates of flu-associated hospitalization among people who get the vaccine. The flu vaccine still helps you even if you end up with the flu.

I already had the flu. Should I get the flu shot?

Yes. The flu vaccine protects against 3 - 4 types of flu strains. If you had one, you are still susceptible to the other strains. Get your flu shot!

Frederick Rosen, MD
Deputy Health Officer
County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department



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Michael Hill *Health Agency Director*

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PROVIDER HEALTH ADVISORY

Date: August 20, 2018

Contact: Christine Gaiger, PHN, Communicable Disease Program Manager
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Mandatory Influenza Vaccination of All Health Care Workers in San Luis Obispo County

To San Luis Obispo County Hospital CEOs, Community Clinics, Physician Offices, Ambulatory Care Centers, and Long-Term Care Facilities:

Influenza season will begin in the fall. Flu season is from October 2018 to April 2019. Last year, San Luis Obispo County experienced very high rates of illness and death from influenza, especially among our most vulnerable populations—infants and small children, the elderly, and the immunocompromised. Thousands of young, otherwise healthy people also die from the flu each year in the United States.

Vaccination of health care workers reduces infection and absenteeism in the workforce, may prevent mortality due to reduced transmission to patients, and results in financial savings to sponsoring health institutions. The best way to prevent transmission of a disease like influenza to those persons we serve is to mandate vaccination of health care workers. Two relevant laws in California require health care facilities to make flu vaccine available to all employees (CA Health & Safety Code §1288.7 effective January 1, 2007; Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard of Cal OSHA (Cal. Code Regulations § 5199), effective September 1, 2010). Employees who refuse vaccination must sign a written declination.

In accordance with the intent of these laws, and consistent with the powers of authority of the County Health Officer, I am requiring employers to require of all unvaccinated health care workers, that, in addition to signing an influenza vaccine declination statement, a mask be worn while on duty during influenza season. Influenza vaccine should be received by the health care worker by November 1, 2018; after that time, a health care worker should have either received the vaccine or signed a declination and be wearing a mask.

I am also recommending that health care administrators adopt an easy way to identify the health care workers who have received their influenza vaccine. One example of this type of identification is to place a sticker on the health care worker's badge following vaccination.

Thank you for your hard work in making San Luis Obispo County a healthy community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Borenstein".

Penny Borenstein, MD, MPH
San Luis Obispo County Health Officer

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