

**MENDOCINO COUNTY
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH
INFLUENZA HEALTH ADVISORY**

January 30, 2018

This influenza season is turning out to be a bad one. Since October 1, 2017, seven Mendocino County residents have died from influenza, and over twenty people have died from respiratory illnesses like pneumonia. Not only is the flu making people very sick, but the very young and those over 60 years of age are at risk of developing secondary illnesses like pneumonia. You may have heard that this year's flu vaccine is not as effective as in past years at preventing people from getting the flu, and that is true. However, getting the vaccine will make the symptoms milder and help you recover sooner should you get the flu. Because pneumonia is such a serious complication of the flu, adults over 65 years are urged to get the vaccine for pneumonia as well as the flu vaccine. Ask your health care provider about the flu and pneumonia vaccines.

You can find locations where flu shots are available in your community by visiting the Mendocino County Public Health web page at: <https://www.mendocinocounty.org/government/health-and-human-services-agency/public-health> On this page is a "Flu Vaccine Finder" widget where you can type in your zip code, and get a list of places near you offering flu shots.

How to tell if you have the flu, as opposed to a severe cold:

FLU	COLD
Nasal congestion, cough, sneezing	Nasal congestion, cough, sneezing
Sore throat sometimes	Sore throat
Body aches severe, all over	Mild body aches
Nausea sometimes	No nausea
Fever over 101 degrees	High fever rare in adults
Chills and sweats	Not usually chills and sweats
Symptoms come on fast, within hours of exposure	Symptoms develop slowly over a few days

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has issued a health advisory to remind health care providers that there are some antiviral medications for treatment of influenza. These medications are known by their trade names as **Tamaflu®**, **Relenza®** and **Rapivab®**. All hospitalized patients with the flu, and all high-risk patients with suspected influenza should be treated as soon as possible.

Patients considered at high-risk are:

- Children younger than 5 years, (the highest risk is for those younger than 2 years)
- Adults aged 65 years or older
- Persons with any kind of chronic illness – heart disease, asthma, diabetes, lung disease, etc.
- Persons taking drugs to suppress their immune systems
- Women who are pregnant or within 2 weeks after giving birth
- People younger than 19 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- American / Alaskan Natives
- People who are extremely obese (body-mass index equal to or greater than 40)

- Residents of nursing homes or other chronic-care facilities

If you get the flu, antiviral drugs are a treatment option, especially if you are in a high-risk category. Ask your health care provider about the antiviral medications that are available. You do not need to wait until a test has been performed to confirm you have the flu. The benefit of these drugs is greatest when taken as soon as possible after you develop symptoms.

Antibiotics

Antibiotics are not effective against the flu. Using antibiotics when they are not necessary can lead to you becoming resistant to them, and can also produce unwanted side effects.

When to go to the hospital

If you or someone you are caring for experiences these symptoms, you should seek medical attention right away:

1. Difficulty breathing
2. Shortness of breath
3. Chest pain or severe abdominal pain
4. Confusion
5. Sudden dizziness
6. Severe vomiting or vomiting that won't stop

When to take your child to the hospital

Signs of a medical emergency in children can be different from those in adults. If your child experiences any of the following symptoms when she has the flu, a visit to the emergency room is warranted:

1. Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
2. Bluish color to the skin, especially on the face or chest
3. Not drinking enough fluids, leading to dehydration
4. Difficult or unable to wake up or interact with others
5. Severe irritability: Child does not want to be held
6. Stiff neck
7. A severe headache that doesn't improve after taking Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Motrin (ibuprofen)

In addition to the symptoms above, **if you have an infant with the flu** take them to the emergency room if he or she experiences any of the following symptoms:

1. Fever (over 100.3) and the child is under 3 months old
2. Unable to eat
3. No tears when crying
4. Significantly fewer wet diapers than normal

Protect yourself and your family from the flu!

- If you are sick, stay home
- Wash hands often or use hand sanitizer frequently
- Avoid touching your face with your hands
- Stay away from people who are ill
- Get your flu and pneumonia shots

For more information contact the Mendocino County Health and Human Services Agency Public Health branch at (707) 472-2600 or 1 (800) 734-7793.