



**For Immediate Release:**

September 9, 2013

## **LA County's First Influenza Cases of the Season Confirmed** Everyone six month of age and older urged to get a seasonal flu vaccine

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is receiving early reports of laboratory confirmed influenza (flu) including our first reported influenza hospitalization. The strain was identified as Influenza A H1N1, which is covered by this year's vaccine along with two or three additional strains that research shows could be common this flu season.

“While occasional reports of cases and sometimes low levels of influenza can continue throughout the summer and early fall, these recent reports suggest a possible early start to the influenza season in our area,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “However, we cannot predict how severe or how mild a flu season will be. We encourage everyone, six months of age or older, to get either the influenza shot or the nasal spray vaccine, and to practice basic hygiene, such as hand washing, to prevent the spread of influenza and other respiratory diseases.”

Early vaccination will provide protection throughout influenza season and into the spring. Since it can take up to two weeks to develop an immune response, it is important to vaccinate as early in the season as possible. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that yearly influenza vaccination begin in September or as soon as the vaccine is available. Influenza accounts for up to 220,000 hospitalizations, and an average of 24,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the CDC. Symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, headache, and muscle ache within the first three to five days of illness.

“The flu can affect each person differently. Most 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 complications such as pneumonia and may require hospitalization,” said Dr. Fielding. “Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.”

Residents are encouraged to contact their regular doctor or health plan for information on where and when they can get a flu shot. Many private providers have already received flu vaccine and are making it available for their patients. Additionally, flu vaccinations are currently available at many pharmacies and other retail venues including some supermarkets for a low fee.

For individuals without health insurance or another source of health care, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health will begin offering flu vaccinations at special community outreach events in late September and October.



## Upcoming events offering free flu vaccinations:

Date: September 28th, 2013

Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Location: Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks East Valley Adult Center,

Address: 5056 Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys CA

Date: October 10th, 2013

Time: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Location: Norwalk Arts and Sports Complex

Address: 13000 Clarkdale Ave., Norwalk, CA

Date: October 24th, 2013

Time: 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Location: Harvard Recreation Center,

Address: 1535 W. 62nd Street, Los Angeles CA

To find locations where flu vaccinations are currently available and will be offered in the future, visit [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/FluLocatorMain.htm](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/FluLocatorMain.htm) or call the LA County Information Line at 2-1-1 from any landline or cell phone in the county.

Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone (except infants under six months of age). It is especially important that certain groups be 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 years of age
- Adults 50 years of age and older
- Anyone who is immunocompromised due to disease or medication
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or who are overweight or obese
- People who work or live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities as well as 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



## Resources

- Information about influenza and flu vaccinations can be found at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)
- Spanish-language information about influenza and flu vaccinations can be found at <http://espanol.cdc.gov/enes/flu/index.htm>
- Resources for finding a flu vaccination provider in your area can be found at [www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/FluLocatorMain.htm](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/FluLocatorMain.htm).

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 nearly 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>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

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