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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Do you or a family member have the flu? On-Line Tools are now available to help answer the question

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is introducing two on-line tools that can be used as guides to help people who think they or their children may have the flu. Both tools are available on the Santa Barbara County H1N1 flu website at: www.sbcfluinfo.org

One tool is specifically for children. This on-line tool was developed by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, one of the top rated children's hospitals in the country. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta has given permission to Santa Barbara County to offer the tool to residents in our community.

The on-line tool is not a substitute for a parent's judgment and it cannot anticipate every possible medical situation. It serves as another source of information for parents. In the complicated world of H1N1 influenza, the on-line tool asks questions to help parents in assessing the health and needs of their children. It is a useful tool to help parents understand what steps they can take if their child gets the H1N1 flu.

Another tool is specifically for people over 18 years of age. This tool was developed by Emory University based on what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined as key risk factors for a bad flu outcome. This tool assists in making the decision if a doctor's attention is needed.

For most people, prevention is the best strategy. The Public Health Department encourages parents and children to follow six steps to decrease the spread of H1N1 Flu and lessen their chance of becoming ill.

- Get the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine when it is available for you based on your age and medical condition
- Wash your hands frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Sneeze or cough into your upper arm or sleeve to avoid contaminating your hands
- Stay home when you are ill to avoid spreading illness to others
- Avoid contact with others who are ill

For more information, see the Public Health Department's website www.sbcfluinfo.org. To access the on-line tool, click on "Does my child have the flu?" at the bottom of the website page. For additional questions, contact your health care provider or call the H1N1 Information Line toll-free at 1-888-722-6358. You may also follow-up with twitter at: sbcpublichealth.

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