



PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
300 N. San Antonio Road • Santa Barbara, CA 93110
(805) 681-5102 • FAX (805) 681-5191
www.sbcphd.org

P R E S S R E L E A S E

News Media Contact:

Susan Klein-Rothschild
Public Information Officer
(805) 681-5435
(805) 896-1057 (cell)
sklein@sbcpd.org

September 30, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

H1N1 FLU HITS LOCAL ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS HARDEST

In Santa Barbara County as well as nationally, children and young adults have experienced the most severe cases of H1N1 flu. Hospitalization rates for young people are much higher than seniors. Santa Barbara County has had no deaths attributed to H1N1 flu.

Over half of the 20 Santa Barbara County residents who have been hospitalized for H1N1 or Swine flu to date are between the ages of 11 and 31. Eleven people in this age range have become sick enough with the H1N1 flu to be admitted to area hospitals since June of this year. Infants and children are the next most frequently hospitalized age group, with three infants and three 7-9 year olds hospitalized for H1N1. All six people who have been placed in intensive care units have been under 30 years old. Only three local people over the age of 31, with ages of 47, 58 and 72, have been hospitalized so far. The total number of local cases of H1N1 infection is not known, as only people who are hospitalized or die from H1N1 are tested for the virus. No one has died from the H1N1 flu in Santa Barbara County.

A pattern of more frequent and more severe H1N1 infection among younger people is evident throughout the US. The majority of national H1N1 cases reported between April and July were among 5-24 year olds, and the majority of deaths due to H1N1 were among 25-49 year olds. "This pattern is quite different from what we usually see with the seasonal flu, which disproportionately impacts older people," explained Santa Barbara County Health Officer, Dr. Peter Hasler.

Various theories about why the H1N1 flu has been harder on younger people have been proposed. One possibility is that older adults might have greater immunity to H1N1, but only about one third of older people have antibodies to H1N1 according to a recent article in the New England Journal of Medicine. Another possibility is that the immune systems of younger people over-react to the virus, causing severe inflammation in the lungs and respiratory tract, which leads to a more severe disease. Additional data will need to be gathered before the age pattern of H1N1 can be fully understood.

For more information call the H1N1 information line at 1-888-722-6358.

###