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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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What should residents do when sick with the flu?

H1N1 flu continues to be present in California. We know that most people recover from H1N1 infection without the need for hospitalization or medical care. National levels of severe illness from H1N1 influenza appear to be similar to levels for seasonal influenza. We do not yet have a vaccine for H1N1 flu. When the vaccine does become available, it will likely be in phases and those most at risk of severe illness will be receiving the vaccine initially.

Seasonal flu is also expected to return in the usual fall flu season. One of the most important steps for preventing the seasonal flu is to obtain the seasonal flu vaccine. Season influenza is responsible for up to 35,000 deaths in the United States each year. This vaccine should become available in late August or early September.

The Santa Barbara Public Health Department recommends residents follow the advice of the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) www.flu.gov when they or someone in their family is sick with symptoms that are similar to regular flu symptoms. These easy steps will help individuals recover and prevent the spread of the flu to others.

If you or a family member get symptoms similar to the seasonal flu, (fever, cough, sore throat, runny/stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue), the following steps should be taken:

Avoid Contact with Others – Stay home and stay away from others as much as possible. Do not travel or go to work for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine and you feel capable of doing usual routines.

Recover at home – Get plenty of rest and drink clear liquids. Most individuals will recover at home without needing medical care. If you have severe illness or are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health provider.

Wear a face mask – When it is necessary to leave your home to go to the doctor's office or when in common space shared with others, wear a face mask to decrease the spread of the virus to others.

Cover your nose and mouth – When you cough or sneeze, cover with a tissue, and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into your shoulder or your elbow.

Wash your hands – Wash often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based hand cleaners are also effective.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth - Germs spread this way.

Seek emergency medical care for children with any of the following:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Not drinking enough liquids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention are:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

For more information, please go to www.sbcfluinfo.org, or www.flu.gov

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