

Latino Times



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Spotlight on Influenza – Flu Season is starting, don't forget to get vaccinated!

“The flu virus is spread from one person to another before a person has symptoms and after you have symptoms. Infants and older adults can have severe complications and bad outcomes from flu. So to stay healthy and to prevent others from getting the flu it is important to get the flu vaccine. It also is important to keep in mind that the flu spreads when someone coughs, sneezes or talks.” – Chief Medical Officer Lakshmi Dhanvanthari, MD, Health Plan of San Joaquin

Here's some practical advice from Health Plan of San Joaquin. You can help protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu if you get the vaccine before the end of October. As always, your best defense against the flu is to get your flu shot. If you miss getting the shot in October you can get it any time – just be sure and get it as early as you can during the flu season.

Who needs it?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months and older be vaccinated against the flu. It's especially important that people at high risk for getting complications from the flu—such as pneumonia—get the vaccine. That high risk group includes: kids younger than five years old; adults 65 and older; pregnant women; and people who have chronic health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease.

Anyone who lives with or is in close contact with someone on that list should also make getting the vaccine a priority.

The flu is not the same as a cold, and comes on quickly. Even healthy kids and

adults can get really sick from the flu. They can then spread it to family and friends.

Signs of Flu can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Feeling tired
- Vomiting and diarrhea

Those allergic to eggs may still be able to get the flu vaccine, but should talk with their doctor about what immunization will be best. It takes several weeks for the flu vaccine to take effect. And since flu season can continue until May, the sooner you get your shot the better.

What else can you do?

Even if you've had your flu shot, you should take these steps to avoid the flu virus:

- Wash your hands often, using soap and water
- No soap and water? Use an alcohol-based hand cleaner
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth
- Stay away from sick people

It's also important to minimize the spread of germs to others. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue away. If you get sick with a flu-like illness, stay home until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without taking a fever-reducing medicine.