

Help to avoid a 'twindemic' in Stanislaus County with flu shots

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This year has been unlike any other. COVID-19 is still among us. Now: Flu season. It is believed that the flu virus and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both spread during fall and winter.

The good news is that for the flu we actually do have a vaccination. We all just need to get our flu shot.

The CDC estimates only about 45% of adult Americans get a flu shot each season, and Stanislaus County Public Health says 43% here received flu vaccinations in 2018. That means over half of Americans were left unprotected. Too many, including here in Stanislaus County, have become complacent about the flu and are at risk for themselves, their families, essential workers, and medical care givers.

This year because of the COVID-19 pandemic it is even more important to get the flu vaccine. That means everyone 6 months of age or older. As Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, says, get your flu shot, "so that you could at least blunt the effect of one of those two potential respiratory infections."

With the pandemic and resulting societal challenges, Health Plan of San Joaquin (HPSJ) in August launched the multimedia campaign Step Up! Help Restore Our Communities. We ask everyone to do their part to stay healthy and keep others healthy.

To benefit HPSJ members and our wider community, the message, in English and Spanish, is direct and clear:

- Wear a mask
- Wash your hands
- Stay 6 feet apart
- Get a flu shot!

As part of our ongoing initiatives, Step Up! Stanislaus is a more aggressive educational campaign that keeps up with current events while continuing to leverage local public health and community organization efforts to promote safe behaviors. If you look

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around Modesto and other Stanislaus County neighborhoods, you will see HPSJ billboards and local bus ads, you will hear us on radio and Spotify, and you can interact with us on social media (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook).

Affordable face masks can be a challenge for many. Because this presents a community-wide risk and hinders safe reopening, Health Plan of San Joaquin has invested in distributing these face masks.

There are 30 county organizations partnering with HPSJ for Step Up! Stanislaus. They are distributing HPSJ-branded face masks and informational tool kits to their constituents, customers, and members. Additional agencies are invited to join at hpsj.com/partnering-with-our-community.

We are grateful to each of our community partners for distributing the masks and providing COVID-19 prevention education. We are clear, we are consistent, and we are guided by care for our community.

It's a different kind of flu season this year — with COVID-19, let's not make it a "twindemic." Get a flu shot this fall, without fail.

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