



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 5, 2011

## State Officials, Health Providers Join Forces to Increase Flu Vaccination Rates Among Health Care Workers

*Flu Shot Push Comes During National Influenza Vaccination Week*

**SACRAMENTO** – Highlighting the importance of flu vaccinations in reducing the risks of illness and infections among patients, state public health officials have joined with a group of statewide health care providers to urge all health care workers to get their annual flu shots.

A joint [letter](#) issued today by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the California Hospital Association (CHA), the California Association of Health Facilities (CAHF), the California Medical Association (CMA), the California Association of Physician Groups (CAPG) and the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC) California APIC Coordinating Council challenges all health care facilities in California to increase flu vaccination rates among health care workers. The letter is being distributed to all hospitals, nursing homes and physician groups as part of National Influenza Vaccination Week (*Dec. 4-10*).

“Our goal is to make California hospitals and health care facilities safer places for patients and workers during flu season,” said Dr. Ron Chapman, Director of the California Department of Public Health and state public health officer. “We will continue working with partners in the health care industry to promote greater vaccination acceptance among their employees.”

Influenza is a contagious disease that can be spread before symptoms appear, and is

- more -

## **STATE OFFICIALS, PROVIDERS URGE FLU VACCINATIONS**

**2-2-2-2-2**

responsible for 200,000 hospital admissions and 36,000 deaths nationwide every year. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vaccination of all health care workers is strongly recommended in order to prevent transmission of the illness to patients, especially those with long-term medical conditions who are at high-risk for serious complications from the flu. The CDC recommends that all health care workers – even those who are not directly involved in patient care (*e.g. clerical, housekeeping, administrative, volunteers, etc.*) - be vaccinated annually.

According to the CDC, influenza outbreaks in hospitals and long-term care facilities have been attributed to low vaccination rates among health care workers in those facilities. When an employer mandate is in effect, vaccination rates typically exceed 98 percent.

Most health care facilities, including hospitals and skilled nursing homes, are required to offer annual flu vaccines to health care workers and volunteers at no cost. Those who refuse to be vaccinated must sign a written declaration. Despite these requirements, however, the overall vaccination rate for health care workers in all settings remains low. For example, the overall vaccination rate for hospital workers just over 64 percent, significantly less than the federal Healthy People 2020 goal of 90 percent.

“Being vaccinated is the single most effective way to protect patients, yourself and your family from the flu,” said C. Duane Dauner, president/CEO of the California Hospital Association (CHA). “All health care workers - be they physicians, nurses or administrative personnel - have a responsibility to put the needs of patients first. California’s hospitals and other health care providers call upon all health care personnel to do the right thing and get vaccinated for the flu.”

“At a time when tens of thousands of patients are dying each year from influenza in the United States, we need to take every precaution to be sure that patient exposure to the virus is as low as possible,” added James T. Hay, M.D., president of the California Medical Association (CMA).

#####

### **CONTACTS:**

Anita Gore  
California Department of Public Health  
(916) 440-7143

Deborah Pacyna  
California Association of Health Facilities  
(916) 441-6400 x226

Kris Deutschman  
California Association of Physician Groups  
(916) 444-8801

Jan Emerson-Shea  
California Hospital Association  
(916) 552-7516

Molly Weedn  
California Medical Association  
(916) 551-2069

Jerry Pennington  
California APIC Coordinating Council  
(818) 902-2998