ABAHO
ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA HEALTH OFFICIALS

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PRESS RELEASE

With Respiratory Viruses Circulating, All Bay Area Health Officers Recommend Actions to Stay Healthy for the Holidays

As levels of circulating respiratory viruses increase and people spend more time indoors for the holiday season, it's important to know all the ways to stay healthy this winter.

All Bay Area Health Officers recommend the following actions:

Get Vaccinated Against COVID-19, Flu and RSV.
- Staying up to date on vaccination is the best way to protect against severe COVID-19, influenza (flu) and RSV disease. These viruses pose the greatest risk to infants, older adults, and persons with certain health conditions. Getting recommended vaccines when pregnant protects pregnant people as well as their babies.
    - One dose of this year's updated COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for everyone ages 6 months and older, at least two months after their last dose. Children 6 months to 4 years of age and immunocompromised persons who have never been vaccinated are recommended to get additional doses.
    - People without insurance or whose insurance does not cover the cost of vaccines can get the updated COVID-19 vaccine for free through the Bridge Access Program. Visit vaccines.gov to find a location.
    - Everyone 6 months and older should get an annual flu vaccine. Children 8 years and younger need 2 doses the first year they get the flu vaccine.
    - Adults 60 years and older can get vaccinated against RSV to prevent severe illness. Pregnant people should also get the RSV vaccine at 32 to 36 weeks of pregnancy to protect their newborn. RSV vaccines are available at many pharmacies and healthcare providers.
    - COVID-19, flu and RSV vaccines can be given at the same time.

"Currently, only 10.7% of Santa Cruz County residents have received the updated COVID-19 vaccine, which protects against new circulating variants," said Dr. Lisa Hernandez, Santa Cruz County Health Officer. "It is imperative that those living in a long-term care facility, individuals with chronic health conditions or who are 65 or older receive the updated COVID-19 vaccine, flu, and RSV vaccine, and we encourage everyone to make an appointment to get up to date with their vaccinations as we head into the holiday season."

Stay Home if You Are Sick.
- If you are feeling sick, the best way to keep from spreading illness to others is to stay home as much as you can until you have recovered, no matter which virus you have.
- People who need urgent or emergency medical care, including testing or treatment, should not hesitate to seek it.

Test Yourself if You Feel Sick.
- Reduce the chances of infecting someone else with COVID-19 by finding out if you have the virus. Test right away if you have symptoms of COVID-19, so that you can get treatment if you test positive. Remember, COVID-19 symptoms may be mild.
- Make sure to stock up on home test kits. This fall, every household can get up to eight free COVID tests from the U.S. government.

Get Treatment.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, treatment is available. Medication for COVID-19 helps prevent hospitalization and is available to most adults and some teens with even mild symptoms.
- COVID-19 treatment works best when started right after symptoms begin, and within five days of symptoms starting.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about treatment options or visit covid19.ca.gov/treatment.
- If you test positive for flu, treatment is available for those at high risk for severe illness.

Wear a Mask in Indoor Public Places and Improve Ventilation.
- For added protection, consider masking in indoor public settings, especially if you are at higher risk for severe disease (over 65 years of age and/or persons with certain health conditions). Wearing a well-fitting high-quality mask, such as a KF94, KN95 or N95, can prevent infection with COVID-19, flu, RSV, and other respiratory viruses all at once.
- Wearing a mask can reduce your risk of getting sick and missing out on work, school, and holiday events.
- Masks also lower the likelihood that you pass on an infection if you are already sick, even if your symptoms are mild. This helps protect people around you, especially those at higher risk of serious illness.
- Improve ventilation indoors by turning on HVAC systems, filtering the air with a portable HEPA filter (the same kind that many use for wildfire smoke), pointing fans out open windows, or opening doors and windows when possible. These can all help viruses from spreading indoors.

Health Officers from the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, San Francisco, San Mateo, Solano, Sonoma, and the city of Berkeley encourage the public to take these easy steps to protect themselves and others this holiday season.

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