

## Healthwatch: Do I Need to Fear the Flu?

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Flu is on the airwaves and in the air. We live in an area that has been hit hard by the H1N1 flu. Cases of the Seasonal Flu have already been reported in San Diego County...much earlier than in years past. All this flu talk might cause us to be frightened, especially when it means that normally healthy individuals might become deathly ill if infected. But fear may serve an advantage if it prompts us to prepare and take precautions.

### The Best Medicine is PREVENTION:

- Keep your immune system fully charged. A healthy diet, regular exercise and adequate sleep are key.
- Get a flu vaccine. The seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for all individuals. The H1N1 vaccine will be targeted towards the young and the chronically ill.
- Get the pneumonia vaccine (Pneumovax) if you are at risk ( $\geq 65$ , a smoker, or chronically ill). The Pneumovax will provide some protection against complications of pneumonia if you should catch the H1N1 flu.
- Follow basic germ fighting practices...wash your hands, cover your cough, stay home if you're sick.

### Know What to Look For:

- Fever or chills AND cough or sore throat are the hallmark signs of any flu illness.
- In addition you might experience body aches, runny nose, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting.
- The seasonal and H1N1 flus come on quickly and may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

### If You DO Get Sick:

- If you have a chronic illness, contact your doctor right away...you and your close family members may be candidates for flu treatment/prevention medication. However, this medicine is most effective if initiated within the first 48 hours of illness.
- Stay home! You are contagious for up to one week, but especially while you have a fever. You should be fever free (without help of fever reducing medications) for 24 hours before returning to work or school.
- Protect others in your household by "keeping to yourself" while you are ill.

### BE PREPARED:

Just as you want to have your household ready for a disaster, make sure you're ready if a flu pandemic does hit or if you're "quarantined" due to illness. Have food stores, supplies and medications sufficient for one to two weeks. The CDC is recommending that businesses have a "Sick Policy" in place in the event their employees need to be off work due to flu. Check with your employer about their policies should a flu pandemic hit.

### Get a Flu Shot at these Ramona Locations (Check the Health Ministry bulletin board in hall for details):

PPH will provide flu shot clinics for adults age 18 and older *(there will not be a clinic at RLC):*

*October 10, 9am-noon* at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 411 6<sup>th</sup> St.

*October 19, 9:30 am-12:30 pm* at Ramona Senior Center, 434 Aqua Lane.

MINUTE CLINIC (inside CVS) offers flu shots *Daily 10-6:30 pm.*

Stater Bros and Albertsons will hold periodic flu clinics-check store for details.