



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

H1N1 MOST SEVERE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, TEENS AND PREGNANT WOMEN

Children under two years of age and children and adolescents with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, and diabetes, are at increased risk of severe illness from the H1N1 Flu or swine flu.

Over half (58%) of the 26 Santa Barbara County residents hospitalized with complications of H1N1 since late June were younger than 19 years old. 75% of people placed in intensive care units due to H1N1 complications were 16 or younger. To date, the only death in the County has been a teenager with multiple medical conditions.

Pregnant women are at increased risk of complications and death from H1N1 Flu infection. Nationally, over 25% of pregnant women who were hospitalized for H1N1 Flu have died. Although the total number of deaths is relatively small (28 as of October 1, 2009), the concern is very great.

“This pattern is very different from what we normally see with the seasonal flu which disproportionately impacts older people,” explained Santa Barbara County Health Officer, Dr. Peter Hasler. “A doctor should be contacted as soon as possible when a child under age two, a pregnant woman or a person of any age with chronic lung, heart, neurological, immune or other disorders becomes ill with fever and cough,” he emphasized

The public should be aware of these key messages regarding H1N1 Flu.

- The H1N1 Flu is widespread in the county.
- **H1N1 Flu is suspected when a person develops fever and cough.** Many viral infections cause these symptoms but influenza is usually more severe and has a sudden onset of fever, cough, body aches, sore throat, chills, headache, and vomiting.
- **The following groups of patients are at increased risk** for severe disease and complications with influenza. Prompt medical evaluation by phone or appointment is very important. Treatment is commonly needed. Starting medication early helps in the recovery and prevention of complications from H1N1 Flu.
 - **Pregnant women**
 - **Children under two years of age**
 - **Children 2-18 years of age who have a medical condition** that affects the respiratory, immune, nervous or skeletal systems, such as asthma, cystic fibrosis, cancer, cerebral palsy, or muscular dystrophy.
 - **Adults who have a medical condition** that affects the respiratory, heart, immune, kidney, nervous or skeletal systems, such as asthma, emphysema,

heart failure, cancer, immune suppressing medications, diabetes, kidney failure, or multiple sclerosis.

- **Healthy children and adults** with suspected influenza should be taken care of in the home away from others to decrease the spread of illness. They should rest, drink extra fluids and take fever & pain relievers as needed.
 - **Healthy children and adults** who have severe symptoms or begin to recover and then relapse with worse symptoms should contact their healthcare provider immediately. A complication from H1N1 Flu may develop that requires evaluation and treatment.

For additional information, go to the Public Health Department flu website www.sbcfluinfo.org, call 888-722-6358, or follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/sbcpublichealth](https://twitter.com/sbcpublichealth).

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