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**Influenza season has officially started and vaccine is available at many sites in the County. OC Health Care Agency will be offering free flu shots at numerous locations throughout the County beginning the week of October 27<sup>th</sup>. See <http://www.ochealthinfo.com/Public/flu/index.htm> for the locations and groups eligible for free shots. Available retail flu vaccine clinics can be found at [www.flucliniclocator.org](http://www.flucliniclocator.org).**

- **The American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Infectious Diseases, releases policy statement updating the current flu immunization recommendations in children, 2008-2009.** Recommendations for annual influenza immunization have been expanded this year to include **all children, both healthy and with high-risk conditions, 6 months through 18 years of age.** This will target all school-aged children, the population that bears the greatest disease burden, including an increased need for influenza-related medical care. In addition, reduction of transmission among school-aged children is projected to reduce transmission of influenza to household contacts and community members. **Household contacts and out-of-home care providers of healthy children younger than 5 years of age and of children with high risk-conditions should also be vaccinated annually.** See <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/peds.2008-2449v2>.
- **Influenza vaccination coverage of children 6-23 months of age remains low in 2006-2007.** CDC assessed flu immunization of 6- to 23-month-old children with the National Immunization Survey, an on-going telephone survey which includes a follow-up mail survey to the children's vaccination providers and covers all 50 states. Findings revealed that only 21% of children aged 6 to 23 months were fully vaccinated in the 2006-07 season, the third season after CDC formally recommended influenza immunization in this group. Prevention of influenza and its complications in this age group is a public health priority because they are at greater risk for influenza complications, compared with older children. Additional studies are needed to identify barriers to influenza vaccination in this age group. See the 9/26/08 *MMWR* at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5738a2.htm>.
- **Study finds an increase in *Staphylococcus aureus* coinfections among pediatric deaths.** During the 2004–2007 influenza seasons, 166 influenza-associated pediatric deaths were reported to the CDC. Of the 90 children who fell into a group recommended for influenza vaccination, only 18 (20%) were at least partially vaccinated. Bacterial co-infection increased over the three years and was reported in 6%, 15%, and 34% of the deaths from 2004-2005 to the 2006-2007 seasons. *S. aureus* was the most common co-infection and increased five-fold, from one case in 2004–2005, three in 2005–2006, and 22 in 2006–2007; 64% were methicillin-resistant (MRSA). To read more, see *Pediatrics* 122(4): 805-811.
- **WHO recommends no change in flu vaccine components for the Southern Hemisphere 2009-2010 season.** Flu season in the southern hemisphere typically runs from May through October. Each September the WHO analyzes the circulating flu strains before selecting the ones to include in the following season's vaccine. The current flu vaccine includes strains similar to A/Brisbane/59/2007 (H1N1), to A/Brisbane/10/2007 (H3N2), and to B/Florida/4/2006. See <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/recommendations2009south/en/index.html>.
- **FDA approves new rapid diagnostic test that distinguishes seasonal influenza from novel strains.** The Human Influenza Virus Real-Time RT-PCR Detection and Characterization Panel was developed by the CDC and uses the reverse-transcriptase polymerase chain reaction process to amplify the viral genetic material which is then labeled with fluorescent molecules and analyzed. The results are generated in four hours. This rapid turn-around will allow for faster detection of seasonal influenza in the community each year, and for a quicker response in a pandemic potential situation. For more information, see <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2008pres/09/20080930a.html>.

## Avian Influenza Update

- No new human H5N1 cases have been reported by the WHO since Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>. For the latest WHO H5N1 updates, see [www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/).

### Recommended Resources

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/>;  
OC: <http://www.ochealthinfo.com/epi/flu/surveillance.htm>;  
CA: <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/YRDL/html/FLU/Fluintro.htm>;  
HHS: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>; **General:** <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>

If you have any comments about this flyer, contact Alina Burgi or Pamela Hipp at (714) 834-8180. To receive this newsletter by email, please contact us at [epi@ochca.com](mailto:epi@ochca.com).

