



VENTURA COUNTY
HEALTH CARE AGENCY

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Ventura County health workers required to get flu vaccinations

(VENTURA, Calif.) – In an order issued today by Dr. Robert Levin, Ventura County Public Health Officer, as of January 1, 2015, all health care workers (HCWs) in Ventura County hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing and long-term care facilities, ambulances and other licensed health care facilities are required to receive an annual influenza immunization or wear a protective mask while in contact with patients.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza infection affects 5-15% of the U.S. population every year, leading to an estimated 3.1 million days of hospitalization and 31.4 million outpatient visits. Influenza accounts for an estimated 36,000 excess deaths in the U.S. each year, 90% of which are in persons ages 65 years and older.

“Getting vaccinated is one of the most important steps healthcare personnel can take to protect their patients and themselves from the flu,” said Levin. “Our goals are to increase the rate of influenza vaccinations of HCWs, reduce employee absenteeism during flu season and reduce the risk of HCWs transmitting influenza to their patients.”

This is the first time Ventura County has issued a mandatory flu vaccine mandate. The order will remain in effect throughout flu season which generally is defined as December 15 – March 31 of the following year.

Those HCWs who refuse to receive the influenza vaccination for religious or other reasons will be required to wear a face mask in patient care areas during the influenza season. Mandatory vaccination or masking policies have been shown to increase HCW vaccination rates to above 95%.

The new rule is part of a growing trend among health-care facilities nationwide. Similar orders have been issued in 23 other California counties.



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The CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease. While circulating flu viruses vary from one year to the next, the seasonal flu vaccine is designed to protect against the four main flu viruses that researchers predict will cause the most illness during the upcoming flu season.

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