



Public Health

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

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SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH URGE INDIVIDUALS WITH MILD RESPIRATORY INFECTION, OTHER NON-SERIOUS ILLNESSES TO AVOID TRIPS TO HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

(Santa Cruz County, CA) Since we are seeing a surge in cases of influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19, Santa Cruz County public health officials are urging individuals with asymptomatic or mild cases, or other non-serious illnesses, to avoid unnecessary trips to already burdened hospital emergency departments, and to get vaccinated or boosted if they have not already done so.

Local hospitals have recently experienced an influx of patients seeking emergency department care for relatively mild respiratory infections. Most individuals who contract these illnesses do not need to visit the hospital's emergency department and can effectively recover from their illness at home, or by seeking primary care treatment and/or speaking with their primary care provider

People with severe symptoms such as significant difficulty breathing, intense chest pain, severe weakness, or an elevated temperature that persists for days are among those who should consider seeking emergency medical care for their condition. Young children who are showing signs of shortness of breath should also seek emergency care. Individuals should not visit the emergency department if the symptoms of their illness are mild to moderate – including a cough, sore throat, runny nose, or body aches, and should instead consult an outpatient primary care provider. Many providers have 24-hour nurse advice lines. This information can be found on the back of your insurance card or in your online health portal.

Unnecessary visits to hospital emergency departments place great strain on hospitals and the frontline healthcare workers who continue to bravely battle this surge in respiratory illness. Such visits can also cause a delay in care for patients experiencing a true medical crisis and contribute to the depletion of finite resources including medical staff, testing kits, personal protective equipment, and therapeutic treatments. Emergency Departments should not be used solely for the purpose of testing, and should never be used to

obtain a return to work or school note. We ask that our local employers, schools and daycares do not require these notes, but rather rely on self-attestation of resolution of symptoms.

“The best defense against serious illness and hospitalization from COVID-19 or influenza is to get vaccinated and boosted. If you have not gotten vaccinated or boosted and are eligible, please do so now. Do it for yourself, your family, and your community, including the health care workers we depend on to be there when we truly need emergency care,” said Dr. David Ghilarducci, Santa Cruz County Deputy Health Officer.

Vaccines offer strong protection against serious illness from COVID-19 and influenza. For local information on COVID-19, influenza and RSV, including on where to get vaccinated or tested go to www.santacruzhealth.org or call (831) 454-4242 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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