



"Protecting the health of all Californians"

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OCTOBER 12, 2015

INFORMATION ON 2015 FLU SHOTS

A temporary exemption has been granted under California law to permit children younger than 3 years of age to receive influenza vaccine, regardless of its mercury preservative (thimerosal) content. The exemption is granted from October 9, 2015 through December 31, 2015, because the current supply of preservative-free vaccine for young children is inadequate.

The exemption was requested by the California District of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the California Academy of Family Physicians, the California Medical Association and the California Immunization Coalition.

There is no known risk of autism or other health problems associated with the dosage of preservative in influenza vaccine. This vaccine is licensed for use nationwide by the US Food and

Drug administration for children, and the benefits are clear. Influenza vaccine, while not a requirement for entrance into daycare or school, is the best way to prevent the spread of this disease.

The need for an extension of the temporary exemption will be evaluated, and CDPH will be in regular contact with the vaccine manufacturer to assess product availability and to continue to monitor the vaccine supply.

In California, the Mercury Free Act of 2004 (AB 2943, Pavley, Chapter 837, Statutes of 2004) prohibited flu vaccines for pregnant women and children under three that contain more than 1.0 micrograms of mercury. The law allows the CHHS Secretary and the Governor to provide an exemption.

Similar exemptions have been granted in California during shortages of preservative-free influenza vaccine in 2006, 2009 and 2013.

Dr. Karen Smith

Director
State Public Health Officer
CA Department of Public Health

"This exemption is necessary because health care providers in California are currently facing shortages of influenza vaccine that meets the limits set in California law.

Delays or shortages in vaccine result in fewer young children being immunized and more of them becoming ill with influenza, which can be life-threatening."

Websites

[Secretary Dooley Letter to Sanofi Pasteur](#)

[CDPH Vaccine Exemption Information](#)

[CDPH Flu Website](#)

[Find a Flu Shot](#)

[Vaccines For Children Free Vaccine Program](#)

CDPH FLU PREVENTION STRATEGIES

In the United States, up to 49,000 die from influenza-associated illness each year; no other vaccine-preventable disease kills more people in this country. Consequently, CDPH and the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommend annual influenza vaccination for all persons at least six months of age.

While influenza is not currently circulating widely in California, health care

providers need to begin immunizing patients now to ensure that they are protected for the upcoming season. The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease are at high risk for serious flu complications.

Californians can take basic steps to protect themselves and their families from getting flu and other respiratory infections.

- **Wash your hands often**
- **Cover coughs and sneezes with a sleeve or tissue**
- **Stay home when you are sick**

Locations for Flu Shots or VFC Free Flu Shots are available at the links on the right side of this page.

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