

## Swine Flue Orange County Weekly update—3 More Deaths—No Sign of Harmful Virus Mutation

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In the regular weekly update, The California Department of Public Health, CDPH, recently reported swine flu deaths in California have now reached 318, an increase of 21 during the week. In Orange County, the total deaths have climbed to 35, up from 32 one week ago. For both Orange County and the state, the weekly death rate is less than the previous week. However, new hospitalizations were considerably higher than the previous week.

Since the pandemic began this spring, statewide H1N1 hospitalizations (including any deaths that were not hospitalized) are now at 6,069, an increase of 689 from the previous week. New hospitalizations in the week before were only 580, but both weeks were less than the high mark set three weeks ago when 753 people were hospitalized for H1N1.

A similar pattern appeared for Orange County last week. Total OC H1N1 ICU hospitalizations increased last week by 26 to a total of 156. In the previous week, there were only 10 new H1N1 ICU hospitalizations in Orange County.

The percentage of patients in doctors' offices for flu like illnesses also decreased moderately from the previous week. Last week 6.6% of doctor visits were for flu, down from 8% in the previous week. According to Dr. Mark Horton, Director of CDPH, "several indicators are indicating that there may be some leveling off, but still, the main message is that we are seeing very widespread disease throughout the state."

Even though there have been recent press reports of troublesome mutations in the H1N1 virus, that has not happened in California as of last week. Dr. Horton said "We are continuing to monitor any signs that the virus is changing in any way that would affect resistance to antiviral medicine and we continue to see no evidence of increased severity of the virus or increased resistance to antiviral medicine, so no genetic changes."

The supply and distribution of H1N1 vaccine is also improving. CDPH Reports that statewide, doses equivalent to about 13.4% of the population have been distributed. In Orange County, the state indicates that as of last week, OC had received 523,430 doses, equivalent to about 16.4% of the OC population.

As of our deadline yesterday, the only H1N1 vaccination clinic information on the Orange County Healthcare Agency's web site referred to clients of California Children's Services and the county clinic for pregnant women.

[Click here to go to the web site.](#)

Another way to find the H1N1 vaccine is through Google. They have a zip code based locator . [click here to go to the page](#)

With the coming of the holiday season, Dr. Horton repeated the now familiar recommendations about how to reduce the spread of the disease.

"There is going to be a lot of travel, there's going to be a lot of congregating—family gatherings, shopping malls, --it is time to redouble our efforts to ensure that we're aware of the simple things we can do to protect ourselves and our families. So, it's about washing hands frequently and thoroughly, using hand sanitizers, they are very effective, covering the nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing, and staying home when you're sick."