



2022 Winter Flu Season Statement

From: Glenn Goldis, MD, CMO/CMIO, Kern Medical
Re: KHS Winter Flu Season Statement

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The upcoming 2022 cold and flu season may be anything but usual as we consider 3 important viruses that typically worsen during the winter months.

COVID-19:

While we are currently experiencing a decrease in COVID-19 cases including the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron sub-variants, we are closely watching a rise in the Northeastern US of another strain called BQ.1 and BQ.1.1. So far, these variants appear to be highly transmissible but are likely susceptible to the new bivalent COVID booster. For those who are at risk for complications from COVID including older adults, those with compromised immune systems, or those who have not yet been fully vaccinated, please consider getting fully vaccinated and boosted or see your physician for a personalized COVID prevention recommendation. Additional recommendations around masking or other public health mandates will be issued by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) as necessary.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV):

RSV is a common virus causing cold-like symptoms in mostly infants and young children that typically resolves in 1-2 weeks. However, some children are at higher risk for complications from RSV including Pneumonia and progressive breathing difficulty including premature infants, children with asthma, cardiac or pulmonary birth defects, and those with compromised immune systems. We are already seeing a rise in cases here in Kern County and should be practicing preventive measures including thorough hand washing, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding direct contact with high risk children. While there is no vaccine available for RSV, there is a medication that may be considered for use in high risk infants already infected that may be more likely to experience complications called palivizumab.

Influenza:

The incidence of Influenza virus during cold and flu season often peaks once or twice from October through March each year. While it is hard to predict when the flu will peak this year, now is the time to receive your flu shot. For those over 65 years of age, a high dose flu vaccine is indicated to assure better immunity against getting the flu. Good health hygiene habits including hand-washing and covering your mouth and nose during a cough or sneeze are still the cornerstone of effective flu prevention.

Glenn Goldis, MD, MMM
CMO, CMIO
Kern Medical

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1700 Mount Vernon Avenue | Bakersfield, CA 93306 | (661) 326-2000 | KernMedical.com