

MEDIA RELEASE

December 1, 2022

Public Health Encourages Everyone to take Preventative Measures as Winter Viruses Circulate

The flu, [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\)](#) and [COVID-19](#) are circulating at levels higher than usual for this time of year and are expected to continue to increase, according to the California Department of Public Health.

With many viruses circulating at high levels and with the holiday gathering and traveling season upon us, it is important that we all do our part and take preventative measures to ensure our hospitals have capacity to care for all vulnerable patients who may need lifesaving treatment.

“There is no better time than now to get started on your road to better overall health,” says Brynn Carrigan, Director of Public Health. “Eating healthy, exercising regularly, and getting good sleep reduces your risk of obesity and chronic diseases and enhances your immunity.”

Kern County Public Health urges everyone to protect themselves and their families from respiratory illness with the following prevention tips:

- Wash hands often
- Avoid being around people who are sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Stay home when you are sick
- Get your COVID-19 and flu vaccine

Most childhood respiratory illnesses are mild and resolve on their own without the need for emergency care or hospitalization. Call your doctor to get medical advice and see what you can do at home and when it is best to come in to be examined.

While there is no cure for respiratory viruses, there is guidance provided by [CDC](#) to help families care for their child’s mild illness at home:

- Manage fever and pain with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. (Never give aspirin to children.)
- Drink enough fluids. It is important for people with RSV infection to drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Talk to your healthcare provider before giving your child nonprescription cold medicines. Some medicines contain ingredients that are not good for children.

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"The 'triple-demic' of RSV, influenza, and COVID-19 is severely impacting all of our emergency rooms across Kern County. The community can help support our first responders and hospital care teams by knowing when to seek emergency care. If you or someone you know is experiencing a medical emergency such as bleeding that will not stop, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain, severe pain or trauma, or a change in mental status such as confusion, get to an emergency room immediately. For mild, cold-like symptoms, a visit to a primary care physician's office, urgent care, or telehealth provider. And the best defense against any respiratory illness is to wash your hands frequently, wear a mask, stay home when you're sick, and get the flu and COVID vaccines."

**Ken Keller, President/CEO of Memorial Hospital and
BJ Predum, President/CEO of Mercy Hospital**

"Your Kern County firefighters and dispatchers are always ready to answer the call for emergency services. There is an important distinction that happens for actual emergencies versus a call for medical advice. Just as you rely on your local emergency responders, we rely on our citizens to understand and adhere to this distinction. Please take the time to understand when, and when not, to call 911. This seemingly small act could mean the difference between life and death."

Aaron Duncan, Fire Chief & Director of Emergency Services

For more information, please contact Michelle Corson at (661) 868-0288.

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