



Superintendent's UPDATE

Thursday, November 3, 2022

COVID-19 and School Health Update

Dear San Mateo County Education and Child Care Community,

As we make our way into November, it is time to prepare for good health over the long holiday season. The best way to do that is with COVID and flu vaccinations. Whether for yourself, your family, or your school community, please prioritize these important vaccinations. According to San Mateo County Health (SMCH), new subvariants expected to arrive in the United States are mostly sublineages from Omicron, and the updated bivalent booster would still be very effective and protective against severe disease.

There are ample opportunities to receive COVID and flu vaccines throughout the county or you can organize a vaccination event at your school. Please share this vaccination flyer ([English/Spanish](#)) with your communities, and let's vaccinate now to enjoy a healthy holiday season.

COVID Vaccination Timing

Community members often ask whether and when they or their children might be eligible for the bivalent COVID vaccine. The [CDC recommends](#) that individuals ages five years and older receive one updated (bivalent) booster if it has been at least two months since their last COVID-19 vaccine dose, whether that was their final primary series dose or an original booster. Omicron-specific boosters for those under age five are expected to become available in December or January. If you recently had COVID-19, the [CDC states](#) you may consider delaying your next vaccine dose (primary dose or booster) by three months from when your symptoms started or, if you had no symptoms, when you first received a positive test. This [chart](#) provides a summary of who is eligible for which vaccines and when.

Vaccination Options

As mentioned previously, there are many pathways to get vaccinated, including health care providers, pharmacies, and vaccination clinics. SMCH lists upcoming vaccination clinics on its [website](#), including clinics in partnership with schools in South San Francisco, Belmont, East Palo Alto, Redwood City, and Menlo Park. If you are interested in hosting an SMCH vaccination clinic on your campus, please complete this [interest form](#). The California Department of Public Health also has a [webpage](#) dedicated to vaccination clinics, including information, options, and best practices.

Influenza and RSV on the Rise

We continue to hear that cases of the flu and RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) are appearing at higher levels than normal for this time of year, and there is concern about their continued presence throughout the coming months. RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. While most people recover in a week or two, RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults, and is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children under the age of one in the United States. While the flu hasn't taken the county by storm, that is not the case in other parts of the state or country, so we could be next. Again, the best option to protect yourself is with the flu vaccine. It takes two weeks after being immunized to be fully protected. The vaccine only keeps you fully protected for about one year, so it's important to get vaccinated every year.

Additional Protective Measures for COVID, Flu, and RSV

COVID, the flu, and RSV are all respiratory illnesses that can be transmitted in similar ways. Therefore, the measures that offer protection for one illness, offer protection for the others as well. First, get tested for COVID-19 if you develop viral symptoms, such as a cough and fever, and if positive, isolate for 5-10 days. If you don't have COVID, stay home with a fever and wear a mask as long as you are symptomatic to protect others. Wearing a mask in crowded spaces, washing your hands, and promoting good ventilation are all additional ways to protect yourself from these viruses.

COVID Testing

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is making test kits available to public and private schools to encourage student and staff to test themselves before returning to school after the Thanksgiving break. The hope is to limit disruptions to in-person learning and engagement in extracurricular activities in the period between Thanksgiving and the winter break. CDPH will provide the San Mateo County Office of Education with test kits for distribution to public and private schools before the winter break. SMCOE staff will work with schools to arrange for pick up of kits in early December so schools can distribute them to students and staff before they leave for the winter holiday break.

As always, thank you all for your work to support our students and schools.



Nancy Magee
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

Please note: A copy of this letter in Spanish will be [posted here](#) shortly.