# Press Release

*Area Hospitals Take Actions to Prevent the Spread of Influenza*

Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Mee Memorial Hospital, Natividad Medical Center, and Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital are working together with the Monterey County Health Department to keep your family healthy during influenza ("flu") season. Each year, influenza causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and thousands of deaths in the United States. While seasonal influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, influenza activity is usually highest between December and February and can last through the spring. The hospitals in Monterey County are taking action now to prevent influenza illnesses and deaths.

Vaccination is the best way to protect you and your family from complications of influenza. Hospitals are partnering with the Health Department to bring free influenza vaccination clinics to communities. Vaccine is available for individuals 6 months of age and older and is offered at no cost. Children must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. A complete list of clinic locations, dates, and times is available at www.mtyhd.org/flu.

Individuals hospitalized for serious illness are vulnerable to influenza infections. In order to prevent exposure to individuals at high risk of severe influenza disease like newborn babies and elderly patients, the hospitals will be limiting visitation during influenza season. Anyone with flu-like symptoms or who has recently been exposed to someone with influenza will not be allowed in patient care areas. In addition, only visitors 14 years of age and older will be allowed in patient care areas. These visitor limitations are similar to those implemented by the facilities in prior influenza seasons.

Influenza vaccination of health care workers protects medically fragile patients. At the direction of the Monterey County Health Officer, the hospitals require all health care workers to receive this season's influenza vaccine or wear a protective barrier mask while in patient care areas. This measure reduces the chance that an infectious health care worker could spread influenza to multiple patients while providing care.

The hospitals and Health Department will implement these measures beginning November 5, 2018. Based on information from past influenza seasons, the agencies have jointly agreed to keep these necessary preventative measures in place through April 30, 2019. They may be extended if influenza is still circulating in Monterey County during late spring.

For more information on the hospitals' efforts to protect vulnerable patients, please contact the individuals below:

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