Riverside County health officials reinforce vaccination, safety tips after recent surge of influenza cases

An upswing in influenza cases in Riverside County has prompted health officials to remind residents there is still time to get vaccinated and urge them to take simple precautions to avoid catching the flu.

Last month, there were about 1,000 people in Riverside County who tested positive for influenza from clinics, urgent care facilities and doctor’s offices, according to Barbara Cole, director of Disease Control for RUHS-PH. Most of the cases were influenza B, which is unusual since influenza A normally predominates early in the flu season (October through April), Cole said.

Because of the spike in cases and the unusual pattern in the influenza season, Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer, is reminding residents there is still time to get their flu shot.
“It’s a rough season and there’s no indication it’s slowing down, so the best way to protect yourself is to get the flu shot,” said Kaiser, who noted vaccination supplies are plentiful. “It takes just a few minutes and can save you a lot of misery.”

So far this flu season there have been four flu-associated deaths in Riverside County, including a child under 5 years of age, and 17 influenza cases under 65 years old that required hospitalization in intensive care units.

In addition to getting a flu shot, Kaiser said there are some safety tips everyone can do to protect themselves and slow the spread of the flu:

-- Wash hands frequently
-- Cover coughs and sneezes
-- Stay home from school and work when sick

For more safety tips and information about the flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/keyfacts.htm