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California Health Plans Make It Easy to Protect Yourself from the H1N1 Virus

Plans Provide Coverage for Vaccinations

SACRAMENTO – With the emergence of a new, highly virulent flu strain, the California Association of Health Plans announced that all seven of the state’s largest commercial health plans, as well as those offering government-funded health care coverage, have taken steps to make it easy for the insured to receive the H1N1 vaccination and necessary medications to protect themselves from this new virus.

“Health plans are committed to doing their part to protect the public in the face of this new flu pandemic and are making sure there is no cost to the insured get vaccinated,” said California Association of Health Plans President and CEO Patrick Johnston.

Based on information made publicly available, all seven of the largest commercial health plans are waiving co-payments, deductibles and co-insurance for all of their members who get vaccinated by a doctor or medical professional within their designated provider network. In some cases, this even applies to those without such coverage in their health plan contract. The plans are also covering the administrative costs for the vaccine – the cost for medical providers to administer the vaccine to individuals. The federal government is paying for the cost of the vaccine itself.

Additionally, health plans that provide health care coverage for people enrolled in public programs, such as Medi-Cal Managed Care and Healthy Families, will provide reimbursement to providers administering the vaccine and will charge no out-of-pocket fees to enrollees, per federal and state policies.

“California’s health plans encourage all of their members who fall within the priority populations to get vaccinated for both the H1N1 virus and the seasonal flu virus this year and are providing educational information so their members know their options for vaccination and treatment,” said Johnston.

Health plans are also actively encouraging health care providers that serve their membership to register with the proper authorities to become vaccinators and are providing useful, common-sense information to their membership on how best to protect themselves from any flu virus. These steps include washing your hands frequently, covering your mouth with your arm when coughing and sneezing, and staying home from work or school when you are sick.

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The CDC has recommended prioritizing vaccine for the following populations when the H1N1 vaccine becomes available: pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than six months of age, children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years old, health care and emergency medical services personnel, and people from 25 through 64 years old if they have chronic medical conditions that increase their risk of complications from influenza infection.

Because we are facing a new global flu virus, health plans are in close contact with state regulators and local, state and federal public health officials. The public health community is learning more about the H1N1 virus on a daily basis, so please refer to the CDC for up-to-date information about the virus at www.flu.gov or the [California Department of Public Health's H1N1 website](#).

CAHP is a statewide trade association representing 39 full-service health plans. Through legislative advocacy, education and collaboration with other member organizations, CAHP works to sustain a strong environment in which our member plans can provide access to products that offer choice and flexibility to the more than 21 million members they serve. For more information, please visit www.calhealthplans.org or call (916) 552-2910.

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