Local Hospital Leaders Urge Community to Avoid Gatherings over Labor Day Weekend

Practicing physical distancing, wearing a mask & following health guidelines can slow the spread of COVID-19 and help save lives

SACRAMENTO (September 3, 2020) – In an effort to prevent another spike in COVID-19 infections, as happened after the Memorial Day and Fourth of July holiday weekends, hospital leaders up and down California’s Great Central Valley and foothill communities are encouraging people to avoid large family and social gatherings during the upcoming Labor Day weekend.

“Experience during the pandemic has shown the increased spread of COVID-19 following holidays when large groups of family and friends have gathered,” said Bryan Bucklew, CEO of the Hospital Council – Northern & Central California. “It’s natural for us to celebrate together. People need people. However, during this unprecedented health crisis, it’s also important that we do so safely.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “The more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and COVID-19 spreading.” County public health officials throughout California confirm that following holidays, such as Memorial Day and the Fourth of July, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 have jumped. Local health care leaders are encouraging community members to avoid large gatherings, to practice physical distancing, wear a mask and remember to practice good hand hygiene.

“I understand that this is a tough time for so many people. This pandemic has exacted a significant toll on all of us: hospitals, businesses, families – everyone,” said Gino Patrizio, CEO of Memorial Medical Center in Modesto. “But there is some good news: we as individuals can take action to help make things better, slow the spread of infection and protect our communities. This Labor Day weekend, avoid large family gatherings, be diligent about physical distancing around others and wear a mask. Wearing a mask and practicing physical distancing are some of the very best weapons against this virus, and we need to make use of them consistently.”

Added Corwin Harper, Sr. Vice President and Area Manager for Kaiser Permanente in the Central Valley, “Slowing the spread of COVID-19 is especially important as we enter flu season, which combined with the coronavirus pandemic may prove even more challenging for our local health care systems. As you have fun, remember to wear a mask, practice physical distancing and wash your hands frequently. Be safe and stay healthy, so we all can thrive.”

The timing of this holiday is significant because it immediately precedes the traditional fall flu season. California’s hospitals are anticipating having to manage the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic
with the expected influx of flu patients. A high rate of spread of both viruses can strain supply chains for personal protective equipment. And, because they share some common symptoms, an uptick in individuals sick with either disease will also stretch the capacity of COVID-19 testing supplies.

“In order for hospitals to preserve their ability to provide COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 care to everyone who needs it, we all need to do our part to slow the spread of the virus,” said Daniel Wolcott, president of Adventist Health Lodi Memorial and Dameron Hospital in Stockton. “Let’s celebrate this Labor Day weekend safely.”

The Hospital Council – Northern & Central California is a nonprofit hospital and health system trade association established in 1961, representing 197 hospitals and health systems in 50 of California’s 58 counties—from Kern County to the Oregon border. Locally, its members include Adventist Health, Dignity Health, Doctors Hospital of Manteca, Doctors Medical Center of Modesto, Kaiser Permanente, Oak Valley Hospital District, San Joaquin General Hospital, Sutter Health, and UC Davis Health. Its mission is to help its members to provide high quality health care and to improve the health status of the communities they serve.

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