

Flu starting to strike South Shore residents

By Kathryn Reed

Flu season has officially arrived on the South Shore.

The numbers are nothing to be alarmed about, according to Barton Health officials, but it's also not too late to get a flu shot. It's also early in the season, with the full onslaught far from being close.



Washing hands
washes away
germs.

One person this month had to be admitted to Barton Memorial Hospital because their influenza was so bad.

Barton reported zero cases of flu in November, 12 in December and 21 nearly three weeks into January.

This compares to the 2009-10 season that saw 71 cases in September, 159 in October, 79 in November, 44 in December, and 52 in January.

These are not the total number of flu cases in the South Lake Tahoe area, but the number of people with flu who went to Barton's urgent care or emergency room.

"The majority of the cases that we are seeing in California

are in the population that is under 65. That group is not the group that usually gets super ill with the flu," said Darcie Carpenter, director of Emergency Management and Infection Control for Barton Health. "It's our working age population that is coming down with it this year."

Usually people older than 65 and younger than 4 are hit the hardest.

Although no one has pinpointed the reason for the switch in age groups getting sick, Carpenter said fewer people went to flu clinics this season offered by El Dorado County and Reno.

Barton urgent care will be offering vaccinations Feb. 9 from 2-5:30pm for \$20. Local doctors also have the vaccine.

Last year people were urged to get the regular flu shot and the H1N1 vaccine. This year that strand has been combined into the regular shot so it's only necessary to get poked with a needle once.

Carpenter suggests doing all the basics to try to stay healthy – eat properly, get exercise, enough sleep and wash your hands.

"You can never wash your hands enough," Carpenter said.

She also says stay at home and don't share your germs at work.