



Health & Safety Alert # 31-11-05

Preventing the Flu

The purpose of this Alert is to encourage all staff and individuals to be vaccinated for the flu. "The single best way to protect against the Flu is to get vaccinated each fall".

In the U.S. influenza causes an annual average of 36,000 deaths ranking 7th among all causes of death. In addition, the flu results in high numbers of hospitalizations and work loss days.

People at High Risk for Complications From the Flu Include:

- People 65 years and older;
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house those with long-term illnesses;
- Adults and children 6 months and older with chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma;
- All children 6 to 23 months of age;
- People with any condition that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions (that is, a condition that makes it hard to breathe or swallow, such as brain injury or disease, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other nerve or muscle disorders.)

Who Should Not be Vaccinated?

There are some people who should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. These include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.
- Influenza vaccine is not approved for use in children less than 6 months of age.
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

Vaccine Side Effects

The flu shot: The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Almost all people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. However, on rare occasions, flu vaccination can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

Good Health Habits

Good health habits are also an important way to help prevent the flu.

- ***Avoid close contact.***
Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- ***Stay home when you are sick.***
If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- ***Cover your mouth and nose.***
Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- ***Clean your hands.***
Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- ***Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.***
Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
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If you do not have a personal physician, local Departments of Health often offers flu shots at a reasonable cost.

When obtaining your annual flu vaccine, ask your physician if you qualify for the pneumonia vaccine also.

For questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

11/05