

## PRESS RELEASE

### STOPPING THE FLU STARTS WITH U

**January 2017:** The typical flu season runs October through May. Now that Uintah Basin Healthcare has confirmed cases of the flu, it is a good time to once again caution that the flu can be dangerous and remind the public that it can usually be prevented with a simple flu shot.

#### WHAT IS THE FLU?

The flu is a highly contagious virus that usually enters the body through the mouth, nose or eyes. The virus can become airborne if an infected individual coughs or sneezes, thus spreading rapidly to people within close proximity. Flu symptoms are often mistaken for catching a cold or simply feeling under the weather; however, the sudden onset of symptoms, such as severe muscle aches, extreme fatigue, chills, severe chest discomfort and dry, unproductive coughing, most commonly signal the flu.

Mild flu symptoms can quickly progress and become severe. Most people who get the flu feel much better within 1-2 weeks. Most healthy adults can infect others 1 day before and 5-7 days after symptoms appear. If you have the flu, it's important to take precautions to protect yourself and those around you by staying home and avoiding close contact with others until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours. This will help stop the spread of the virus.

#### WHAT IS THE FLU SHOT?

The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The CDC has determined that receiving the flu vaccine does NOT cause flu, nor is it associated in any way with later onset of autism in children.

#### WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that individuals older than six months of age receive the vaccine, and they stress that flu shots are particularly important for the following high risk groups:

- Children & infants
- Pregnant women
- Seniors
- People with disabilities
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- Travelers and people living abroad
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including healthcare workers

Those who have an allergy to eggs or any ingredients in the flu vaccine should speak to their healthcare provider. If you have ever had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS), speak to your healthcare provider. The vaccine is not approved for children younger than six months.

## **WHEN TO GET VACCINATED**

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that people get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as the vaccine becomes available in their community. Vaccination before December is best since this timing ensures that protective antibodies are in place before flu activity is typically at its highest. However, it's not too late! CDC continues to encourage people to get vaccinated throughout the flu season. Over the course of the flu season, many different influenza viruses can circulate at different times and in different places. As long as flu viruses are still spreading in the community, vaccination can provide protective benefit.

## **AVAILABLE FLU SHOTS**

Most standard dose flu shots are given into the muscle with a needle. A high-dose flu shot may be recommended for older people. The nasal spray vaccine is not recommended for use during the 2016-2017 season because of concerns about its effectiveness. Only the injectable flu shots are recommended for use this season. 2016-2017 flu vaccines have been updated to better match circulating viruses.

## **PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU**

Practicing good hand hygiene is the single most important way to avoid spreading the flu virus. In addition, be sure to cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing. It's also important to get adequate rest, exercise, drink plenty of fluids and practice good nutrition. Doing so will not only offer some protection from the seasonal flu, but from other cold viruses that often circulate during the fall and winter months as well.

## **WHAT IS UINTAH BASIN HEALTHCARE DOING TO HELP PREVENT THE FLU?**

According to Lisa Evans, Infection Preventionist for Uintah Basin Healthcare, "Effective during the flu season (now through May), visiting children under the age of 14 will not be permitted in ER, Med/Surg, ICU or OB areas. This is for the safety of both the children and the patients".

Stephanie Merrell, OB Department Manager states, "For siblings of newborns, visitation must be arranged through the OB Department and visitation is only allowed if the siblings have not been ill during the previous three days".

All personnel working at Uintah Basin Healthcare are required to have annual influenza vaccination unless an exemption is approved. This includes non-contact employees as well as healthcare workers with patient contact, volunteers, students and medical contractors. Employees who receive an exemption will be wearing a mask when in contact with patients during active flu season to ensure that should they become infected, they will not expose patients and visitors to the hospital.

## **WHERE TO GET THE FLU SHOT**

The Walk-In Clinic at Uintah Basin Healthcare (210 W 300 N - Clinic 1, Suite 102 - Roosevelt) offers flu shots Monday-Friday from 8 AM – 8 PM, and Saturdays from 8 AM – 4 PM. Home Care Services (187 W Lagoon - Roosevelt) offers flu shots Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM – 5 PM. The UBMC Pharmacy (210 W 300 N - Roosevelt) offers flu shots Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM – 8 PM, and Saturdays from 9 AM – 5 PM. You may also schedule an appointment with your primary care provider at The Clinic by calling (435)722-3971. Uintah Basin Healthcare has clinic locations in Roosevelt, Vernal, Duchesne, Altamont, Tabiona, and Manila.

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Uintah Basin Healthcare is a community not-for-profit healthcare system, serving the Uintah Basin since 1944.

Today, Uintah Basin Healthcare is the largest and most comprehensive independent rural-based healthcare system in the state of Utah.