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UINTAH BASIN HEALTHCARE

## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### GEARING UP FOR FLU SEASON

*Get Informed & Stay Healthy*

**September 7, 2012:** The typical flu season runs October through May. Experts caution that the flu can be dangerous and remind us that it can usually be prevented with a simple flu shot.

#### WHAT IS THE FLU?

The seasonal flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It spreads between people and can cause mild to severe illness. In some cases, the flu can lead to death. Each year approximately 5-20% of U.S. residents get the flu and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized for flu-related complications.

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.

#### HOW DOES THE SEASONAL FLU SPREAD?

Most experts believe that you can get the flu when a person with the flu coughs, sneezes, or talks and droplets containing their germs land in your mouth or nose. You can also get the flu by touching a surface or object that has the flu virus on it and then touching your mouth, eyes or nose.

#### WHAT IS THE FLU VACCINATION?

The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for people ages 6 months and older.

There is also a high-dose flu shot approved for people 65 and older, and an intradermal flu shot approved for people 18-64 years of age. The nasal-spray flu vaccine is also available for people ages 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

#### MYTHS ABOUT THE FLU VACCINATION

Can a flu shot give you the flu?

-No. The influenza viruses contained in a flu shot are inactivated, which means they cannot cause infection.

Is the stomach flu the same as the flu?

-No. Many people use the term "stomach flu" to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. These symptoms can be caused by many different viruses or bacteria. The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease.

Will the flu shot make me feel sick?

-The most common side effect of seasonal flu shots in adults has been soreness at the spot where the shot was given, which usually lasts less than 2 days. Rare symptoms include fever, muscle pain, and feelings of discomfort or weakness.

#### WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that all individuals older than six months of age receive the vaccine. It is especially important to get the vaccine if you, someone you live with, or someone you care for is at high risk of complications from the flu. Those at high risk include children and infants, pregnant women, seniors, people with disabilities, people with health conditions, and travelers of people living abroad.

People who have had an allergic reaction to the vaccine in the past and those who suffer from egg allergies should not seek flu shots and should speak with a healthcare provider for an alternative method of protection. The vaccine is not approved for children younger than six months.

### **WHEN TO GET VACCINATED**

In the United States, flu season occurs in the fall and winter. Seasonal flu activity usually peaks in January or February, but it can occur as early as October and as late as May.

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. 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.

### **PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU**

In addition to the flu vaccine, 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 UBMC DOING TO HELP PREVENT THE FLU?**

The hospital visiting policy is as follows: Effective during the typical flu season (October-May), children under the age of 14 typically will not be permitted in Med/Surg, ICU or OB areas. This is for the safety of both the children and the patients. However, we will do our best to accommodate our patient's needs and desires and exceptions may be made under certain circumstances.

The OB Department has the following visitation policy: For siblings of newborns, there will be a one-time visit allowed to be arranged through the OB Department if the siblings have not been ill during the previous three days.

In addition, all personnel working for Uintah Basin Healthcare are required to have an annual influenza vaccination. This includes employees as well as healthcare workers with patient contact, volunteers, and medical contractors. By choosing to work in a healthcare environment in any capacity, our personnel are making a commitment to the health and prevention of illness in the patients we serve. Employees who receive an exemption will be wearing a mask in designated patient areas during flu season to ensure that should they become infected, they will not expose patients and visitors.

The Board of Trustees for Uintah Basin Medical Center has adopted this policy, and believes that by doing so, Uintah Basin Healthcare is following the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control, the Utah State Department of Health, the American College of Physicians and American College of Pediatrics. By adopting this policy, we are joining the majority of hospitals in Utah who have already instituted this policy, including Intermountain, University of Utah and MountainStar. Flu vaccines are universally accepted as the industry standard in the provision of health care in hospitals in the U.S.

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

Urgent Care (Suite 101 in the clinic, next to UBMC) will offer the influenza vaccine for walk-in patients, Monday through Friday from 8 AM until 8 PM and Saturdays from 8 AM until 4 PM. Many physicians located in The Clinic next to UBMC will also offer the influenza vaccine. Please call (435)722-3971 to schedule an appointment with your physician of choice.

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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 rural-based healthcare system in the state of Utah.