

## PRESS RELEASE

### THE FACTS ABOUT THE FLU & H1N1

**November 4, 2014:** Some media outlets have recently indicated a confirmed case of the H1N1 influenza virus in Duchesne County. As a point of clarification, Duchesne County School District contracts with Uintah Basin Healthcare to provide a school health nurse. Upon notification of a possible H1N1 case, the school health nurse was asked to prepare an informative letter to educate guardians on the signs/symptoms and treatment of the H1N1 virus. The school district then elected to notify all parents in writing. The letter stated, "There is no immediate threat of infection, this is just to inform you that a case of H1N1 has been reported". To date, there are no confirmed cases of the H1N1 flu virus during this flu season at Uintah Basin Healthcare.

#### 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.

#### HOW DOES H1N1 DIFFER FROM THE FLU?

H1N1 is a flu virus and was first detected in people in the United States in 2009. While the H1N1 viruses have continued to circulate since the pandemic, 2014 is the first season since 2009 that H1N1 has been so predominant in the United States. Symptoms of H1N1 are similar to seasonal flu symptoms, and the H1N1 flu virus spreads between people in the same way that seasonal flu viruses spread.

#### PROTECT YOURSELF WITH A FLU SHOT

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. Getting the flu vaccine is your best protection against H1N1 as well.

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 all 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 (especially children under the age of two)
- Adults age 65 and older

- Pregnant women
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- 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

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**

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. CDC continues to encourage people to get vaccinated throughout the flu season, which can begin as early as October and last as late as May. 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. \*The Uintah Basin has already had a confirmed case of the flu in September.

### **AVAILABLE FLU SHOTS**

There are three different flu shots available. 1) a regular flu shot approved for people ages 6 months and older, 2) a high-dose flu shot approved for people 65 and older, and 3) 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.

### **IN ADDITION TO THE FLU SHOT, HOW CAN YOU 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. To prevent spreading of germs, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. 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.

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 UINTAH BASIN HEALTHCARE DOING TO HELP PREVENT THE FLU?**

According to Lisa Evans, Infection Preventionist for Uintah Basin Healthcare, "Effective during the typical flu season (October-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".

Christy Thacker, OB Department Manager states, "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".

All personnel working at Uintah Basin Healthcare are asked to have annual influenza vaccination. This includes non-contact employees as well as healthcare workers with patient contact, volunteers, and medical contractors. Employees who receive an exemption for personal, medical or religious reasons will be wearing a mask in patient areas of the hospital during 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 101) offers flu shots Monday-Friday from 8 AM – 8 PM, and Saturdays from 8 AM – 4 PM. Home Care Services (26 W 200 N) offers flu shots Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM – 5 PM. You may also schedule an appointment with your family practice physician (435-722-6130) or with your pediatrician (435-725-2000).

STOPPING THE FLU STARTS WITH U!

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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.

