

PRESS RELEASE

UBH PREPARES FOR FLU SEASON WITH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITY

Learn how U can protect yourself from the flu.

October 29, 2019: 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 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 flu often includes the sudden onset of symptoms such as fever/chills, aches, fatigue (tiredness), cough, headache, and sometimes: sneezing, stuffy nose, sore throat or possible vomiting/diarrhea (more common in children than adults).

Flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but are caused by different viruses. Because they share many symptoms, it can be difficult to differentiate between the two. Cold symptoms are usually milder than symptoms of the flu, and colds generally do not result in serious health problems. The following chart may be a helpful resource:

| Signs and Symptoms | Cold | Flu |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Symptom onset | Gradual | Abrupt |
| Fever | Rare | Usual |
| Aches | Slight | Usual |
| Chills | Uncommon | Fairly common |
| Fatigue, weakness | Sometimes | Usual |
| Sneezing | Common | Sometimes |
| Stuffy nose | Common | Sometimes |
| Sore throat | Common | Sometimes |
| Chest discomfort, cough | Mild to moderate | Common |
| Headache | Rare | Common |

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:

- Young Children
- Pregnant women
- Seniors
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- Those with Asthma, Heart Disease, Stroke, Diabetes, HIV/AIDS, Cancer, Neurologic 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

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.

WHEN TO GET VACCINATED

The CDC recommends vaccination before the end of October for best results. While vaccination should optimally occur before the onset of flu activity in the community, providers should continue to offer and encourage vaccination as long as flu viruses are circulating and vaccines are available.

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 the aged population or those with compromised immune systems. High-dose and egg-free flu vaccines are available at the UBMC Pharmacy.

Since the 2018-2019 season, the manufacturer of nasal spray vaccine has used a new H1N1 vaccine virus in production. Some data suggest this will result in improved effectiveness, however, no published effectiveness estimates for this vaccine are available. The nasal spray vaccine may be limited during the 2019-2020 season due to manufacturing constraints.

When in question, ask your provider which flu shot is best for you.

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older as the first and most important step in protecting against this potentially serious disease.

In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading flu to others.

ARE THERE VISITATION RESTRICTIONS DURING THE FLU SEASON?

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

Visiting children in the OB Department will be limited. 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".

WHAT IS UBH DOING TO PREPARE FOR THE FLU?

For personnel flu vaccinations this year, Uintah Basin Healthcare is participating in an emergency influenza preparedness activity in conjunction with Tri County Health and other medical institutions in the Uintah Basin. This exercise is in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which is part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In the event of an emergency, our hospital would be a closed POD, responsible for distribution of medication in the event of an infectious disease pandemic or emergency. One way we would need to be prepared to care for an influx of infectious patients is to be vaccinated ourselves.

A closed POD is a medical facility acting as a "point of distribution" that would be responsible for distributing medication in the event of an infectious disease emergency. If we had an infectious disease pandemic or emergency, we as a hospital would have to be prepared to care for our community. The one way we can do this is to make sure our personnel have the proper vaccinations and medications, so we are protected and continue to work and care for an influx of infectious patients.

We have had many outbreaks of Influenza in the Basin area. The Tri-county area along with the rest of the United States and the World was detrimentally affected and lost many of its people due to the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. We also had many hospitalizations and very severe issues with the H1N1 outbreak in 2009. During last flu season (2018-2019), the tri-county area experienced the highest per capita rate of influenza associated hospitalizations in the state.

Jim Marshall, UBH President & CEO states, "This closed POD exercise was meant to demonstrate both how prepared we would be for a potential influenza emergency, and how many personnel would respond to be vaccinated within a 48-hour period. The Administration Team at Uintah Basin Healthcare provided full support of these efforts and our staff worked together seamlessly to make this a success".

Our closed POD was conducted on October 9-10, 2019. Personnel were notified and asked to come in to designated areas to receive the influenza vaccination within a 48-hour period. Flu Vaccination stations were set up at three main stations, with rotating carts and staff traveling through other departments/sites to provide adequate coverage. In addition, Home Health provided a drive-thru event offering added convenience for staff to bring families to be vaccinated at the same time during the two-day event.

Uintah Basin Healthcare had a tremendous turnout for the closed POD event and was able to vaccinate 92% of our personnel in the designated 48-hour period. Those personnel who were not available during the 48-hour period will receive the mandatory 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 within six feet of a patient during active flu season to ensure that should they become infected, they will not expose patients and visitors to the hospital.

FLU SHOT LOCATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC

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 (some providers do allow walk-ins for flu shots). Uintah Basin Healthcare has clinic locations in Roosevelt, Vernal, Duchesne, Altamont, Tabiona, and Manila. **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 independent rural-based healthcare system in the state of Utah.



Nursing Student Missy Hyder pictured with husband Jesse Hyder (UBH Engineering) after giving him a flu shot.