



# NEWS



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CONTACT:  
Lisa Slater  
(309) 888-5489 (office)  
(309) 838-1599 (cell)

Stuart Blade, BFD  
(309) 434-2627

## **McLean County Health Department to host children's flu clinic at Fire Station #2 in Bloomington on October 29th**

**BLOOMINGTON, IL**— The McLean County Health Department together with the City of Bloomington Fire Department are joining forces to help make getting the seasonal influenza (flu) immunization a little more fun for children in McLean County. On Saturday October 29<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. until 11 a.m., young people ages six months to 18 years old are invited to a flu clinic and firefighter challenge at Fire Station # 2 on 1911 E. Hamilton Road in Bloomington. Adults in need of a flu immunization can also get one at the clinic.

The pairing of seasonal flu vaccinations and fire department fun and education was the brainchild of several Bloomington firemen including Stuart Blade, Public Education Officer with the Bloomington Fire Department. Says Blade, "As a parent and a firefighter/paramedic, I know shots are not an enjoyable experience for kids. We are not trying to hide the fact a child is about to receive a shot, but provide an activity to use their muscles after the shot. When they leave, we hope it's a message of fire safety on their mind instead of a sore arm."

Since September, the health department has been partnering with local businesses and schools throughout McLean County to make getting a seasonal flu shot as easy as stopping by a staff meeting room or in the school office for thousands of adults working in the county. To date, the health department has provided workplace flu clinics for adults at over 75 locations.

Saturday's flu clinic is the health department's first off-site opportunity in the Bloomington-Normal area for children to be vaccinated this year. Children can always be seen at the health department by appointment for flu and other immunizations. Children with most private or public health insurance or that are eligible for the Vaccine for Children's program (VFC) can receive a seasonal flu vaccination at the fire department clinic if accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or authorized proxy and provide their insurance or medical card.

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VFC eligible families are those that live in McLean County and are either uninsured, underinsured, or on Medicaid. A full list of health insurances accepted by the health department is available at: <http://il-mcleancountyhealth2.civicplus.com/562/Child-Immunizations>. Anyone wishing to pay out-of-pocket for the vaccination also has that option.

“We look forward to working together with the Bloomington Fire Department,” explains McLean County Health Department director Walt Howe. Adding, “We are a public health department. Providing immunizations that prevent the spread of infectious diseases, like influenza, is one of our primary obligations to county residents and one of the duties where our public health nurses excel. Any opportunity we have to reach more of our residents by partnering with local businesses, organizations and schools is an opportunity we want to embrace. The Bloomington Fire Department came up with a unique idea and we’re happy to be involved.”

Anyone with the following symptoms or conditions should not receive a flu shot until they have consulted with their primary health care provider about receiving the flu vaccine:

- fever or feel ill
- allergic to eggs or thimerosal
- severe reaction to previous flu vaccines
- previous history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, Lou Gehrig's Disease (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) or other recurring or persistent neurological problems except Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease

Says Howe, “It’s important to remember that even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others and I think most people who have experienced the flu would agree that it’s easier to take steps to stay well than it is to have to get well. An annual seasonal flu vaccination is the best way to reduce the chances that you will get seasonal flu and spread it to others, especially those within our community who are unable to receive flu vaccine due to age or underlying chronic medical conditions.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all people over the age of 6 months receive an annual flu vaccination to reduce the spread of illness. It is particularly important that individuals at high risk of serious flu complications, such as young children; pregnant women; people ages 18 to 65 with chronic health conditions; and individuals 65 years and older, get vaccinated from the flu.

If a child is unable to attend Saturday’s flu clinic at Bloomington Fire Station Number 2 and would like to schedule an appointment at the health department instead, the number to call is (309) 888-5455. Adults

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needing a flu vaccination can stop by the health department's walk-in clinics on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 1 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. until November 10<sup>th</sup> or call (309) 888-5435 (option 4) anytime during the flu season for a vaccination appointment.

The McLean County Health Department is dedicated to the prevention and control of disease through health promotion, early intervention and health protection within our county. For more information about our services visit our website at: <http://il-mcleancountyhealth2.civicplus.com/>. You are also invited to follow us on Twitter (@McLeanHealth) and "Like" us on Facebook (Facebook.com/McLeanHealth), for information about public health affecting you.

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## Background - Influenza

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that can affect individuals of any age and spreads very easily from person to person. Flu symptoms usually last for a few days and include fever, severe chills and body ache, fatigue, mild sniffles, dry cough, and severe chest discomfort. Sometimes, a more serious illness can develop that requires hospitalization and can even lead to death.

In addition to getting vaccinated, the health department encourages residents to practice the following everyday preventive actions and know the facts about flu shots. Many people don't get flu shots because they either don't understand how infectious and serious the flu can be, or they believe a handful of common myths about the flu and the flu vaccine.

### **Flu vaccination myths**

#### **Myth: Healthy people do not need a flu shot**

**Fact:** Even healthy people get the flu; and, can pass the virus to others before they even realize they are sick.

A seemingly healthy adult can begin infecting family, friends and co-workers one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick.

#### **Myth: Getting a flu shot can give you the flu**

**Fact:** Flu shots don't give people flu, not getting flu shots does. The flu shot introduces dead virus into your body to build antibodies to fight the flu off when exposed to it in the natural environment. It takes the body about two weeks to build flu antibodies. A person may experience mild side effects after getting a flu shot, but the side effects are mild and short-lasting, especially when compared to getting the flu.

#### **Myth: If you got a flu shot last season, you don't need another one this year**

**Fact:** Seasonal flu shots are needed every year for two primary reasons: 1. a body's immunity to influenza viruses declines over time, so last year's flu shot will no longer provide optimal protection; and, 2. flu viruses can change from one season to the next, or they can even change within the course of one flu season. A

yearly flu shot protects against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season.

**Myth: If the flu vaccine doesn't match the flu viruses circulating this season, there's no reason to get a flu shot**

**Fact:** The fact is the seasonal flu vaccine is designed to protect against three or four flu viruses. A less than optimal match may result in reduced vaccine effectiveness against the virus that is different from what is in the vaccine, but it can still provide some protection against influenza illness.

**Everyday prevention.**

There are steps you can take in your daily life to help protect you from getting and spreading the flu.

- ✓ Get your seasonal flu shot every year!
- ✓ Wash your hands often—Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- ✓ Cover your sneezes and coughs—Sneeze into a tissue, your sleeve or the inside of your elbow. Throw the tissue in the trash after use, and then wash your hands.
- ✓ Stay home—If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

**Learn the difference between a cold symptoms and the flu in order to get better faster!**

- ✓ If it's a cold: sore throat, mild chills, slight body aches, runny nose, mucus-producing cough, mild chest discomfort. Treatment: antihistamines, decongestants, and pain reliever.
- ✓ If it's the flu: fever, severe chills and body aches, fatigue, mild sniffles, dry cough, severe chest discomfort. Treatment: antiviral medications; see your doctor!
- ✓ The flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease - vomiting, diarrhea, and being nauseous or "sick to your stomach" are rarely the main symptoms of influenza.

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