



NEWS



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The McLean County Health Department encourages making appointments now for influenza vaccinations

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year

BLOOMINGTON – The McLean County Health Department is currently offering influenza vaccinations by appointment for adults and children ages 6 months and up. To schedule an appointment, call 309-888-5455.

The health department accepts most private and public (Medicare or Medicaid) insurance plans and individuals scheduling a flu shot are asked to bring their insurance card with them to their appointment. Flu vaccinations are also available to children eligible for Vaccine for Children (VFC) which includes uninsured and underinsured families, American Indians and Alaskan Natives. Anyone wishing to pay out-of-pocket for the vaccination also has that option.

A seasonal flu shot is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for everyone over 6 months of age. It is particularly important that individuals at high risk of serious flu complications, such as young children; pregnant women; people ages 18 to 64 with chronic health conditions; and individuals 65 years and older, get a flu vaccination. This year's trivalent seasonal flu vaccine protects against two influenza A viruses (an H1N1 and an H3N2) and an influenza B virus.

The health department is hoping residents will stand united against the flu this season and get a flu vaccination to help keep the county healthy. Explains Walt Howe, Director of the McLean County Health Department, "When people get their annual flu shot, they not only reduce their chances of getting seasonal flu, but they also protect those around them who are unable to receive flu shots and may be at high risk for flu-related complications."

Individuals with the following symptoms or conditions should not schedule a flu shot appointment 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

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In addition to getting vaccinated, the health department encourages residents to practice the following everyday preventive actions:

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.
- If you or a family member gets sick with flu-like illness, follow CDC recommendations and stay home for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. The fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after using it.
- If an outbreak of flu or another illness occurs, follow public health advice. This may include information about how to increase distance between people.

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.

Business owners and managers interested in holding an on-site flu clinic at their workplace can call 309-888-5489 for scheduling information. On-site flu clinics are offered to McLean County businesses and organizations; and in most cases employees can use their insurance to cover the cost of the vaccination. There is no charge to bring health department nurses and flu vaccine to worksites.

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. Follow us on Twitter (@McLeanHealth) and “Like” us on Facebook (Facebook.com/McLeanHealth), for information about public health affecting you.

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