



# NEWS



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## Have you gotten your flu vaccination yet?

*McLean County Health Department offering walk-in appointments and community flu vaccination clinics*

**BLOOMINGTON, IL-** It's that time of the year again: time to start thinking about changes in the weather, hot chocolate, pumpkin pie, and seasonal flu. Annual seasonal flu vaccinations protect individuals and their families from influenza, while also preventing the spread of illness in the community.

This flu season, the McLean County Health Department is offering several ways for residents to get their annual flu shot. Says Walt Howe, director of the McLean County Health Department, "We are fortunate to have local businesses in the community opening up their on-site flu clinics to the public to help us reach residents closer to where they live or work. These public clinics, together with our flu clinics at the health department, provide a way to make it more convenient for residents to get vaccinated."

Beginning September 6th, the following flu clinic options are available to adults in McLean County:

- **McLean County Health Department**, 200 West Front Street, Bloomington: Walk-in flu clinic every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.
- **Central Illinois Regional Airport**, 3201 Cira Drive, Bloomington: Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.
- **McLean County Farm Bureau**, 2242 Westgate Drive, Bloomington: Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup> from 9 a.m. until 12 noon
- **McLean County Health Department**, 200 West Front Street, Bloomington: Flu shots available by appointment Monday through Friday. To schedule call, (309) 888-5435.

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The McLean County Health Department accepts most private insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid. For individuals who would rather pay for their flu vaccination rather than use their insurance coverage, the cost is \$30. Insurance and Medicare/Medicaid cards must be presented at the clinic. For a full list of health insurances accepted by the health department, please visit <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/143/Flu-ShotsInfluenza>.

Individuals with the following symptoms or conditions should not attend the flu clinics; and should consult 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 attacks 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

“It is important to remember that we are all in this together. Members of our community who cannot get vaccinated against flu for medical reasons, rely on healthy individuals getting vaccinated to help shield them from the illness and its potentially serious complications,” says Howe.

Business owners or managers interested in holding an on-site flu clinic at their workplace are encouraged to call 309-888-5489 for scheduling information. On-site flu clinics are offered to adults at businesses, schools, and organizations throughout McLean County.

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.

**###**

## **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. 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.
- ✓ 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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