



***Protect Yourself and Those Around You By Getting A Flu Shot***

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Winnebago County Health Department recommend all individuals 6 months and older receive a flu shot as the vaccination is the single best way to prevent getting the flu. Since the beginning of September, the Winnebago County Health Department's Health Promotion Program has given over 6,000 flu shots to individuals in our community. "Influenza affects everyone differently; even healthy individuals can get the flu and it can be serious. By being vaccinated you can protect yourself from influenza and help to prevent spreading it to others," said Winnebago County Health Department Public Health Administrator, Mike Bacon

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory disease that infects the nose, throat, and lungs and can lead to serious complications, hospitalization, or even death. Influenza is spread by coughing, sneezing, or nasal secretions. Anyone can get influenza but rates of infection are highest among children. For most people symptoms last only a few days. The symptoms include: fever, sore throat, chills, fatigue, cough, headache, muscle aches. Pneumonia and bronchitis are examples of serious flu-related complications. The flu also can cause certain health conditions, like diabetes, asthma, and heart and lung disease, to become worse. These conditions also put you at greater risk of flu complications. Influenza affects everyone differently; even healthy individuals can get the flu and it can be serious.

There are two reasons for getting an annual flu shot. The first reason is that because flu viruses are constantly changing, flu vaccines are usually updated from one season to the next to protect against the most recent and most commonly circulating viruses. The second reason that annual vaccination is recommended is that a person's immune protection from vaccination declines over time and annual vaccination is needed for optimal protection. Therefore, annual vaccination is recommended even for those who received the vaccine for the previous season.

Individuals with the following conditions are highly encouraged to get an annual flu shot:

- Young Children
- Pregnant women
- Individuals who care for children younger than 6 months of age
- People with chronic health conditions: such as heart, lung or, diabetes, or a weakened immune system
- Healthcare workers
- People 65 years of age and older

The 2012-2013 flu vaccine will protect you against three different strains of influenza: the A H3N2 virus, the A H1N1 virus, and the influenza B virus. Since the viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), you cannot get the flu from the vaccination. Generally side effects are a sore arm or redness around the injection site. The vaccine takes usually two weeks for your body to develop antibodies. These antibodies fight off infection if you are exposed to the flu virus. There are three different flu shots available:

- a regular flu shot approved for people ages 6 months and older
- a high-dose flu shot approved for people 65 and older, and
- an intradermal flu shot approved for people 18 to 64 years of age.

Take these everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs and to prevent the flu.

- **Clean your hands** – Wash your hands with soap and warm water after coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** – Use a tissue when coughing or sneezing , if you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow—not your hands
- **Contain your germs** – Stay home if you have the flu. If you have fever or chills and a cough or sore throat, call your doctor.

“It’s not too late to get your flu shot. The flu season can begin as early as October, but most commonly peaks in the January or February, however, every flu season is different. To make an appointment for a flu shot, call the Winnebago County Health Department’s Health Promotion Program during normal business hours, at 815-720-4264. For more information on 2012-2013 flu season, visit the Winnebago County Health Department website at [www.wchd.org](http://www.wchd.org), or the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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