Oct. 14, 2020

It’s that time of year again: Flu vaccines available throughout the community

Flu season has officially begun, and health officials say this year with COVID-19 already circulating around the community, it is more important than ever to get a vaccine.

A flu vaccine is needed every year to maintain existing immunity because flu viruses are constantly changing. The flu vaccine is formulated annually to keep up with the flu viruses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months of age and older be vaccinated. It is especially important to protect those who are more likely to experience severe complications from flu illness including pregnant women, people who live with diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or other chronic health conditions, and people age 65 and older.

According to the CDC, approximately 200,000 people are hospitalized in the U.S each year with conditions associated with the flu, and a vaccine can help reduce the burden on the health care systems responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and save medical resources for care of COVID patients.

Humboldt County Health Officer Dr. Teresa Frankovich said, “This time of year, as it gets colder and hopefully rainier, people spend more time indoors together which can increase the risk of COVID-19 spread. At the same time, influenza season is on our doorstep. With two viruses circulating at the same time this year it is incredibly important we protect our health care system’s capacity to provide all of the care we need at the time we need it—not only for these infections but for the unexpected events like accidents and heart attacks that occur throughout the year. One of the best tools we have to do that is flu vaccination.”

Flu shots are available through medical providers and at some area grocery stores and pharmacies.
It takes up to two weeks after receiving the flu vaccine to achieve the best protection. Nationally, flu season lasts from October through May, and public health officials recommend getting the vaccine earlier in the season.

Common symptoms include a fever or feeling feverish, a cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headache and fatigue. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, although this is more common in children than adults.

“Getting your flu shot will help to keep our community healthier and lessen the demands on our hospitals and health care providers,” Dr. Frankovich said. “It is a safe and simple thing we can all do to protect each other this year.”

During the month of October, the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services Public Health Branch has been working with partners to hold community school-based flu vaccine clinics throughout the county. There are two more scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 15, and Friday, Oct. 16, in Arcata and McKinleyville. Appointments can be made by calling the Public Health Clinic at 707-268-2108.

Public Health staff is also planning to hold more community clinics before the end of the year. In addition, most health care providers and many pharmacies carry flu vaccine.

For more information, call your health care provider, local pharmacy or the Public Health Clinic or visit https://vaccinefinder.org/find-vaccine.

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