

Lee County Health Department

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FLU VACCINATION SAFETY AND BENEFITS, SEPTEMBER 2003

Don't you just love this time of year? Warm, sunny fall days are one of life's pleasures. In the field of public health, fall means flu shot season. Some people (like me) get their influenza vaccine each year. Others are hesitant – they may have heard the myth that flu shots can actually make them sick. The truth is that influenza causes an average of 36,000 deaths each year in the United States, and although some people who receive the vaccine may still get the flu, they will usually get a milder case than those who are not vaccinated. Regarding the myth of the vaccine making you sick – the viruses in inactivated influenza vaccine have been killed, so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

Influenza (flu) is a serious disease caused by a virus that spreads from infected persons to the nose or throat of others. Influenza can cause a fever, cough, sore throat, headache, chills and/or muscle aches. Anyone can get influenza. Most people are ill with the flu for only a few days, but some get much sicker and may need to be hospitalized.

Influenza vaccine has been used in the United States for many years. Flu viruses change often, so the vaccine is updated each year. Protection develops about 2 weeks after getting the shot and may last up to a year.

People 6 months of age and older at risk for getting a serious case of influenza or influenza complications, AND people in close contact with them (including all household members) should get the vaccine. An annual flu shot is recommended for people 50 years of age or older; residents of long-term care facilities housing persons with chronic medical conditions; people with long-term health problems such as heart, lung or kidney disease, asthma, anemia or diabetes; people with a weakened immune system due to HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system; long-term treatment with drugs such as steroids or cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs; people 6 months to 18 years of age on long-term aspirin treatment; pregnant women who will be past the 3rd month of pregnancy during the flu season (usually November – March); and for physicians, nurses, family members, or anyone else coming in close contact with people at risk of serious influenza.

You should talk with a doctor before getting a flu shot if you have ever had a serious allergic reaction to eggs or to a previous dose of flu vaccine or if you have a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS). If you have a fever or are severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled, you should wait until you recover before getting influenza vaccine.

The Lee County Health Department will once again be offering flu shot clinics throughout the county in October. This year, no appointments are necessary as clinics will be on a walk-in basis. Flu vaccinations will be offered to adults and to children 6 months through 18 years of age. The cost of the flu vaccine will be \$17 for adults and for children who do not qualify for the Vaccine for Children (VFC) Program. The cost for children who qualify for the VFC Program will be \$10.00. Individuals covered by Medicare Part B who present their card will not be

charged. Vaccine will not be provided to anyone who is pregnant or anyone who has flu-like symptoms. Clinic dates and locations this year are:

Monday, October 20 – Dixon Senior Center 10-11:30 a.m. and 2-3:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 23 – Paw Paw Community Center 10-11:15 a.m.

Friday, October 24 – Amboy Community Center 10:30-11:30 a.m. and 2-3:30 p.m.

Monday, October 27 - Ashton School 10-11:30 a.m.

Monday, October 27 - Meadows of Franklin Grove 2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Wednesday, October 29 – Dixon Elks Lodge 10-11:30 a.m. and 2 – 3:30 p.m.

KSB Hospital will be available at the Dixon Senior Center and the Dixon Elks Lodge clinics to provide pneumonia vaccine. Individuals targeted for pneumonia vaccine are 65 years of age or older, and those with chronic illnesses. Usually one dose of this vaccine is all that is needed. However, a second dose is recommended for people 65 and older who got their first dose when they were under 65, if 5 or more years have passed since that dose.

The Lee County Health Department's mission is to promote and protect the health of Lee County residents. Flu clinics are one example of the myriad of services we offer in pursuit of this mission. For additional information on flu shots or any of our other services, please contact us at 284-3371.

-Submitted by Cathy Ferguson, MPH, Public Health Administrator