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IT'S TIME TO GET YOUR FLU SHOT . . .

Here's a quote that we sometimes hear "I got a flu shot and then I got the flu"! Not true! Let's see if we can cover some important points so you can be more at ease about how the flu develops and how each of us can benefit from getting our flu shots as early as possible each Fall. The flu, also known as influenza, can be thought of as Mother Nature's way of testing us each year to see how well we prepare for the change of seasons. Weather patterns can have an influence on how bad or not so bad the flu season will be. If you get the flu and you're really sick and uncomfortable, then in your mind the flu season is really bad because you caught it and had to suffer through it.

This annual viral respiratory illness has been on our earth and occurring for millions of years. Chances are it will always occur and generations to come will be talking about their experiences each year. The following **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS** segment of this newsletter will hopefully help you to understand the flu and more importantly, prevent you from getting the flu this coming season.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

What is the flu?

An influenza virus that invades cells of your body and makes you sick with cough, fever and muscle aches. In severe cases it can lead to pneumonia and even death.

How do I catch the flu?

The infection enters your body primarily through your respiratory system (nose & mouth).

Who can catch the flu?

All humans.

When can I catch the flu?

Primarily in October of one year through June of the next year, depending on where you live.

How can I reduce the possibility of getting the flu?

Eat healthy foods, attempt to participate in daily exercise and get a good night's sleep. By doing so, your body has a better chance to support and grow new immune cells to fight external virus attacks. Consult with your doctor and schedule annual wellness exams. Talk to your pharmacist to determine the kind of flu shot you need. A flu shot for children is different from the one given to seniors.

Can I catch the flu by getting a flu shot?

The vaccine (shot) does not infect you; it is made with inactivated or killed viruses. If you get the flu after you have received the flu shot, it's because the virus was already in your body or your immune system was weak and the vaccine could not work fast enough to protect you. People 50 years old and older are urged to inquire about a senior vaccination that is stronger. Again, the important issue regarding the answer to this question is that the ingredients in a flu shot do not cause a person to catch the flu. **As stated above, if you contract the flu after you received a flu shot it's usually because you were already exposed to the virus.** Having the flu shot and coming down with the flu usually means that the symptoms and suffering will be less intense if you had received the shot.

What if I catch the flu?

Contact your pharmacist or doctor and describe your symptoms. If you do in fact have the flu, you are contagious and isolating yourself by staying home helps to reduce others from being infected.

Where, other than a doctor and pharmacist, can I learn more about the flu?

If you have access to the World Wide Web go to any of the following websites:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/flu-resource-center>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influenza>

<https://www.frysfood.com/topic/protect-your-health-with-a-flu-shot>

Additional comments:

You can call your healthcare insurance company for advice. Some insurance providers have a "by phone" call center that enables you to talk to a healthcare professional about virus prevention and treatment. Primary care physicians, family practice physicians, hospital emergency room, and walk-in clinics usually staff the most experienced healthcare providers with the expertise to advise and treat you should you become ill with influenza. Although family members and friends mean well, unless they are professional healthcare providers, it is usually best to seek services from those professionals best suited to give you the best advice and treat you properly. Influenza, "flu shots" are recommended for everyone from age 6 months and up. Children and older adults are particularly susceptible to getting complications when "coming down" with the flu. The more people protected by getting the vaccine, the less chance of a large flu season outbreak and the spread of the infection to others. This phenomenon is called "herd immunity".

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