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Flu Vaccination Has Added Importance Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

As flu season begins during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Moore County Health Department urges Moore County residents to protect themselves, their families and those around them by getting vaccinated against influenza.

"Getting your seasonal flu vaccine is extremely important, now more so than ever," said Health Director Robert Wittmann. "Flu can be a serious, even life-threatening, disease. It is vital for everyone to get vaccinated, especially with flu season happening concurrently along with the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against the flu for everyone 6 months and older with any licensed, age-appropriate flu vaccine. Vaccination against the flu can make illness milder and reduce the risk of more serious outcomes, making it especially important for those at higher risk of complications, such as people over 65, children younger than 5, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or obesity. Some of those same groups are also at high risk of complications from COVID-19.

Recent data have shown that it is possible for a person to be co-infected with both COVID-19 and influenza, making vaccination critical as people prepare for flu season during the ongoing pandemic. In North Carolina, flu infections are most common from late fall to early spring with activity usually peaking in January or February.

Flu vaccinations are available through a variety of outlets including hospitals, pharmacies, and private medical offices.   To find locations offering seasonal flu vaccine, visit vaccinefinder.org/find-vaccine .

"We want to do everything we can to minimize having two respiratory outbreaks circulating simultaneously," said Wittmann. "Flu vaccination not only offers you individual protection, but it could potentially lessen the strain on our healthcare systems in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and save medical resources for care of COVID-19 patients."

"To Protect and Promote Health through Prevention and Control of Disease and Injury."
http://www.moorecountync.gov/health/

Environmental Health
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The following precautions should be taken to protect against the spread of flu and other viruses like COVID-19:

- Continue to practice the 3Ws — **W**earing a face covering over your nose and mouth, **W**aiting 6 feet apart, and **W**ashing your hands often can help slow the spread of COVID-19 and flu.
- Stay home when sick. For COVID-19, follow CDC guidance for end of isolation.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and then discard the tissue promptly.

COVID-19 and flu symptoms are similar, so individuals who feel ill should call ahead before going to a doctor's office, local health department or urgent care. They should consult with a doctor about getting tested for flu and/or COVID-19.

Flu symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough and/or sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headaches and/or body aches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea (most common in children)

Anyone who thinks they have the flu should contact their doctor right away to see if they need treatment with a prescription antiviral drug, such as Tamiflu. Early treatment with an antiviral drug can help prevent flu infections from becoming more serious. Treatment with a prescription antiviral drug is especially important for hospitalized patients, people with severe flu illness and those who are at high risk of serious flu complications based on their age or health.

More information about flu is available online through the Division of Public Health at www.epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/diseases/flu.html and from the CDC at www.cdc.gov/flu. Weekly updates on flu surveillance data are posted online at www.flu.ncdhhs.gov.

Moore County's COVID-19 Dashboard can be found here:
https://moorecounty.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/4c11e5bf79b64a6e9c8377d5129cc97c

For more information about COVID-19 and Moore County's response, please visit www.moorecountync.gov/health, find us on Facebook, and follow us on Twitter (@mocohealth).

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