



## ***Flu Season Is Here - Vaccinate to Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones from Flu***

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. This vaccination is the single best way to prevent getting the flu.

“It is not too early to get your flu shot. The flu season can begin as early as October, but most commonly peaks in the January or February, however, the peak may come earlier or later. Flu vaccine provided in October will give protection throughout the season. The 2012-2013 flu season began early, and provides a good example of the unpredictable nature of the flu season. You can do your part to protect yourself and those around you by getting your vaccination before flu starts spreading 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 (ex. Pneumonia and bronchitis), 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, and muscle aches. 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.

Even if you were vaccinated last year it is important to get an annual flu shot because:

- Flu viruses are constantly changing, and flu vaccines are usually updated from one season to the next to protect against the most recent and most commonly circulating viruses.
- 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.

This year’s flu vaccine is made in the same way as past flu vaccines and has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, an annual average of 100 million doses of influenza vaccine has been used in the United States each year and the vaccine has an excellent safety record.

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The 2013-2014 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 dead (inactivated), you cannot get the flu from the vaccination. Generally side effects are a sore arm or redness around the injection site. The vaccine usually takes two weeks for your body to develop the antibodies to 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.

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

Flu shots are administered by Registered Nurses from the Winnebago County Health Department. To schedule an appointment for flu shot call 815-720-4264.

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.

For more information on 2013-2014 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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