

What's New With the Flu?

You may have been surprised, and maybe a little dismayed to see signs up at pharmacies already advertising flu vaccine; a sure sign that summer is waning and winter's not too far around the corner.

While it may be a little early, and most of the time flu activity doesn't peak until between December and February, it is good to start thinking about and making preparations to stay healthy this fall and winter.

So what is the scoop about flu this year?

Yearly flu vaccination for everybody over 6 months continues to be the "first and best way to protect yourself and your family from the flu. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctors' visits, and missed work and school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations" (CDC.) Flu vaccination is especially important in order to protect older people, very young children, pregnant women and people who are more vulnerable to serious flu complications.

So when should you get it? There's a little bit of debate as to when it is best to get the flu vaccine. What is known for sure is that it is best to get the vaccine before flu activity begins, and CDC recommends getting it before the end of October to make sure the body has enough time to build up immunity. Following the vaccination, it takes approximately 2 weeks for the immune system to generate a protective response.

Many argue that getting the shot too soon can lead to waning immunity, and CDC concedes that "delaying getting of vaccine until later in the fall may lead to higher levels of immunity during winter months, [but] this should be balanced against possible risks, such as missed opportunities to receive vaccine."

So, bottom line, it would be better to wait until later in the fall, but an early flu shot is better than no flu shot at all.

This year's review of prevalent flu virus strains has resulted in both a three-component and a four-component vaccine. Both protect against:

- An A/Michigan/45/2015 (h1N1)pdm09-like virus
- An A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus
- A Brisbane/60/2008-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus.

And the four-component or quadrivalent vaccine has, in addition to those 3, a second lineage of B viruses: (B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus.

Like last year, the nasal spray vaccine is not recommended this year.

CDC declares no preference for one vaccine over another among the recommended, approved injectable influenza vaccines. "There are many vaccine options to choose from, but the most important thing is for all people to get a flu vaccine every year. If you have questions about which vaccine is best for you, talk to your doctor or other health care professional."

Uinta County Public Health will offer quadrivalent vaccine at the Health Fair on September 30th 8-12:00 at the Rec Center, and will also have a community flu clinic on October 10th 10-1 at the Bear Community

Building by the Bear Ponds. Call Public Health at 789-9203 with any questions about flu and the flu vaccine.