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Now is the Time to Get Your Flu Shot

HAYDEN, ID – Panhandle Health District (PHD) is encouraging everyone over six months of age to get their influenza vaccine. Flu season is just around the corner and now is the best time to protect yourself.

Influenza, better known as the ‘flu,’ spreads every year throughout the North Idaho Panhandle and can have a significant impact on the community. By getting a flu shot, residents are not only protecting themselves, but other people they live, work and interact with. The exact timing of flu season can vary, but flu activity often begins to increase in October and peaks between December and February and continues to spread through March or April.

“Last season was difficult locally and nationally,” said Jeff Lee, epidemiologist at Panhandle Health District. “We experienced the longest season, the highest level of hospitalizations and the highest number of flu-related deaths in at least a decade.”

During the 2017-18 flu season, Idaho had 101 flu-related deaths, 37 of those right here in the Panhandle. The timing, severity, and length of the season varies from one year to the next. We can’t predict it, but we do know that the severity of a flu season has a significant impact on our communities.

The best way to protect yourself this flu season is by receiving a flu shot and Panhandle Health District is making it easy for everyone. You can walk-in to the clinic during the week without an appointment, come to the after-hours flu clinics every Thursday from 5-7pm or make an appointment. PHD Hayden flu after hours clinics begin September 20th and occur every Thursday evening from 5-7pm through October 25th. Call the other PHD clinics in the five northern counties for dates and times they are offering appointments or walk-in hours.

PHD offers a quadrivalent flu vaccine, meaning it protects against four different flu viruses, two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses. The quadrivalent flu vaccine provides a broader protection against circulating flu viruses compared to a trivalent vaccine, which only protects against three flu viruses.

“You can receive your flu shot at almost any pharmacy now, but it is important to ask what vaccine they carry,” said Kristina Meyer, nurse manager at Panhandle Health District. “Many grocery store pharmacies carry only a trivalent vaccine, which protects against three flu viruses.
The greatest protection you can receive is with a quadrivalent flu vaccine, so we encourage everyone to ask their pharmacy what vaccine they carry.

All medical insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare Part B are accepted. Most insurances cover the cost of flu shots. For uninsured, a children’s flu shot is $20.00, and an adult flu shot is $23.00. High dose flu shots are available for those 65 and older.

An annual flu shot is the best way to protect yourself from flu-related illness. You can continue to prevent the spread of illness throughout your community by washing your hands often and avoiding people with cold or flu symptoms. If you have flu symptoms, it is advised that you stay home to prevent spreading the virus to others. And as always, cover your coughs and sneezes.

Call your local PHD clinic for days and times they are available to take walk-ins or schedule an appointment. For more information on the flu, visit www.panhandlehealthdistrict.org.

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