**FLU SEASON 2019**

**TALKING POINTS**

* The seasonal flu is a respiratory illness; the signs and symptoms of the seasonal flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.
* The seasonal flu is different from the “stomach flu”, which is typically characterized by nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The “stomach flu” can last as little as a day or so – the seasonal flu can last several days or long
* Everyone is at risk of getting the flu; the first line of defense is an annual flu vaccination.
* Vaccination is recommended for people ages six months and older who do not have contraindications, which, in general, is a history of severe allergic reactions to the vaccine or any of its components, including eggs.
* The 2019- 2020 flu vaccine has been updated to reflect the types of flu viruses circulating in the general population, and will be available in trivalent (three components) and quadrivalent (four components). Most flu vaccine available for the 2019-20 flu season is quadrivalent.
* Specifically, all vaccinations will include:
  + An influenza A/Michigan component (H1N1)
  + A second influenza A/Singapore component (H3N2)
  + And an influenza B component
* Quadrivalent vaccine will contain an additional influenza B component.
* The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending use of the nasal spray flu vaccine (live attenuated influenza vaccine, or LAIV), also known as the Flu Mist, as an option for those whom it is appropriate. The nasal spray is approved for use in non-pregnant individuals, ages 2 through 49 years of age. People with some medical conditions should not receive the nasal spray flu vaccine. All LAIV will be quadrivalent.
* No intradermal flu vaccine will be available.
* According to the CDC, the overall vaccine effectiveness of the 2018-2019 flu vaccine against both influenza A and B viruses was estimated to be 29%. This means the flu vaccine reduced a person’s overall risk of having to seek medical care at a doctor’s office for flu illness by 29%. For ages six months to eight years, the estimated effectiveness was 49%. For ages nine to 17, the estimated effectiveness was 6%. For ages 18 to 49, the estimated effectiveness was 25%. For ages 50 to 64, the estimated effectiveness was 12%. For ages 65 and older the estimated effectiveness was 12%.

How well the flu vaccine works, or its ability to prevent flu illness, can vary from season to season and can be affected by a number of factors, including characteristic of the person being vaccinated, and the similarity or “match” between the vaccine viruses and those viruses circulating in the general population.

* We strongly urge you and your family members to get the seasonal flu vaccine at your earliest convenience.
* It’s not “too early” to get the flu shot. The vaccine will be effective throughout the flu season, no matter when you receive it.
* In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccination, there are other steps everyone can take to help prevent or reduce the spread of the flu. Please lead by example and take the following important measures:
  + If you are sick, stay home from work, school, the mall, etc. Encourage your students and their families to do the same.
  + If your child is sick, keep them home from school and daycare. Encourage parents and guardians of your students to do the same.
  + Wash your hands thoroughly and often, with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Encourage students to do the same.
  + Cover your cough, preferably by coughing into your sleeve. Encourage students to do the same.
  + Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like the flu.
  + Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
* There are a number of ways to minimize anxiety about getting a flu shot, including:
  + Educate and explain why a flu shot is important, and how it protects from contracting an illness that could become very serious.
  + Be honest about the fact that a flu shot may cause some brief pain, but acknowledge it’s a quick pinch and before a person has the time to say “ouch”, it will be over.
  + Don’t minimize a person’s fears; be sympathetic and help people manage their fear.
  + Bring a diversion or make a funny face to tell a silly joke.
  + Practice deep breaths or
  + Consider a treat or reward after the appointment.

Reference: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/meetings/downloads/slides-2019-06/flu-3-flannery-508.pdf