

ISU offers free flu shots to first 50 people Friday

Pharmacy program sets open house

October is American Pharmacist Month with the theme "Know your Medicine, Know your Pharmacist." American Pharmacist Month celebrates the profession of pharmacy and promotes the relationship between pharmacists and the people they care for. October is an ideal time to get to know your pharmacist better. Why? It is time to get your flu vaccination, and what better person to administer the vaccine than your pharmacist.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 36,000 deaths each year are a result of complications of influenza. Influenza is commonly known as the flu. The term "flu" is commonly associated with the stomach flu. Symptoms of the stomach flu include diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting. The stomach flu is typically caused by other viruses, bacteria or even parasites and is not prevented by the flu vaccine. The flu that the vaccination protects against is a respiratory illness that presents with symptoms of muscle aches and headaches, sore throat, fever, congestion and extreme fatigue. The flu's complications are what cause it to be so deadly.

A simple case of the flu may evolve into bacterial pneumonia, dehydration and can worsen other chronic medical conditions such as diabetes and autoimmune disorders. The CDC reports that approximately 200,000 people are hospitalized annually due to secondary complications of the flu.

It is important to get vaccinated every year because the virus that causes the illness constantly mutates and changes. Because the virus is mutable, CDC scientists work hard to project what the new changed virus will be, resulting in a new vaccine formulation every year. The flu vaccine alerts your immune system to recognize flu viruses so that it is ready to fight if you are exposed to the virus. The most common side effect of the flu vaccine are redness and tenderness at the injection site. As a killed virus vaccine, the influenza vaccine cannot cause the flu. The CDC reports that the flu vaccine is effective in preventing influenza 70 percent to 90 percent of the time. Most importantly the influenza vaccination prevents severe complicated illness, hospitalization and death. Flu vaccines are available starting in September and the prime time to get vaccinated is during the months of October and November.

Some people are at greater risk of suffering from the flu and its complications should definitely consider getting vaccinated. Some of these people include:

- ◆ People 50 years of age and older.
- ◆ People with chronic medical conditions (diabetes, congestive heart failure).
- ◆ Pregnant women.
- ◆ People in health care.



COMMENTARY
DR. CATHY HEYNEMAN
KIM VAN WYK

- ◆ Children 6 months and older to age 5.

- ◆ People who take care of those at risk for flu and its complications.

It is important to consult with your pharmacist or physician before getting vaccinated if you:

- ◆ Have had a past reaction to an influenza vaccine.

- ◆ Are allergic to eggs.

- ◆ Have a history of Guillain-Barre syndrome.

- ◆ Have a current illness accompanied by a fever.

Your community pharmacist, as a member of your health care provider team, can administer the flu vaccine to you. Most pharmacies are able to bill your medical insurance or Medicaid for you as well. Many community pharmacies have set up flu shot clinics to offer immunizations to their patients.

Getting an influenza vaccine from your local pharmacist is a great way to see how your pharmacist is a member of your healthcare team.

To celebrate American Pharmacist Month and promote the health and wellness of the Pocatello community, Idaho State University's College of Pharmacy will offer adult flu vaccines free of charge to the first 50 people who attend our annual Community Open House. On Friday, Oct. 26, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. the College of Pharmacy invites you to come learn more about the profession of pharmacy. Located at 570 S. 5th Ave., the College of Pharmacy will have all of its patient outreach programs available to you. Operation Diabetes will be offering blood pressure and blood glucose screenings. Heartburn Awareness will offer education and free samples of over-the-counter heartburn medications. Poison Prevention will educate children on common household hazards and poison. And lastly, Operation Immunization will offer free adult influenza vaccinations to the first 50 people. SavOn pharmacy will provide additional influenza vaccines at a discounted price after the first 50 immunizations are used.

Dr. Cathy Heyneman is an associate professor at Idaho State University College of Pharmacy. Kim Van Wyk is a third-year pharmacy student who will graduate in 2009.