



Media Release

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Strike fast, first to stop the spread of influenza this season

By CRDAMC Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – Influenza (flu) season is approaching and it's almost time for annual vaccinations once again.

Influenza, better known as the flu, is a contagious respiratory illness that can lead to mild to serious illness, hospitalization, and even death.



The Flu season typically peaks in the months of January and February; however the United States has seen flu outbreaks as early as October, Cpt. Jennifer Istre, an Army Public Health nurse said.

“The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services reports that approximately 5 – 20 percent of U.S. residents will get the flu each year. Based on the 2010 Census, there are approximately 400,000 individuals who live in the Bell, Coryell, and Lampasas counties combined. That means statistically, our area could see between 20,000 – 80,000 cases of actual flu illness in our population. That’s a lot of flu potentially being passed around!”

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website recently released information on three easy steps that can help stop influenza from spreading.

Step one; take time to get the flu vaccine, the CDC website says.

According to Istre, it is the best protection against getting the virus which also stops it from spreading as quickly.

“Although there are many different flu viruses, this year’s flu vaccine will protect against three to four common flu virus strains,” she said. “Everyone 6 months and older are highly encouraged to get their flu vaccine.”

According to the CDC, young children, pregnant women, individuals with chronic illnesses, and people over 65 years of age are considered high risk for serious flu complications and vaccination can decrease their risk of severe flu illness.

“Vaccination also is important for [health care workers](#), and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to high risk people,” the CDC website states.

Step two; take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs, the CDC states.



Following every-day ‘healthy’ self care practices like washing your hands regularly, covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, getting adequate sleep, eating nutritious meals, and keeping yourself healthy overall, is a good way to avoid contracting the flu, Istre said.

“You should avoid close contact with sick people and stay at home if you feel sick with flu-like symptoms for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone,” she said. “Also make sure you clean and disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated. The flu virus can live on surfaces up to 8 hours and be transferred to others easily.”

Istre advises that parents should keep a close eye on children and have them cough into their sleeves if they don’t have a tissue, and teach them not to place their fingers in their mouths.

“Remember, the flu virus has to first enter our nose or mouths to make us sick. The flu virus is easily spread to others within a six feet distance by coughing, sneezing, or talking,” she said.

“When healthy adults are infected with the virus they can infect others a day before they develop symptoms and up to a week after they are sick.”

Step three according to the CDC is to take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them. Medication will help make the illness milder, shorten the time someone is sick, and help prevent serious flu complications. Follow all instructions given by your doctor if prescribed antiviral medications. The majority of people who get the flu may start feeling better after a couple of days but may not make a full recovery for two weeks, their website states.

“The flu is a virus and not a bacterium so an antibiotic will not help when an individual has contracted the flu. Antiviral medications are available only by prescription and have been shown to work best when they are started within the first two days of getting sick,” Istre said.

Common signs and symptoms of the flu include: fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and fatigue.

“This flu season be proactive and take charge of your family’s health this year. You can reduce your chances of getting the flu and spreading it. If you suspect you have the flu make an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible, she said. “The best action you can take prior to contracting the flu is to follow step 1 of the CDC’s “Take 3” and take time to get your vaccination.”

The Flumist and pediatric influenza injectable has started arriving at Fort Hood. However, adult injectable influenza vaccine is not scheduled to arrive at Fort Hood until late October.

Only certain individuals are eligible to receive the Flumist vaccine. It is reserved for individuals 2 – 49 years-old, who are not pregnant and do not have any chronic illness or weakened immune systems. Additionally, they must meet all requirements on the vaccine screening form.

Patients should contact their clinics with questions regarding getting their vaccine and their eligibility for Flumist. More information can be found at www.crdamc.amedd.army.mil.

All Tricare beneficiaries are authorized to get their vaccines off-post at Tricare authorized establishments. Prior to receiving an immunization off post, beneficiary's should ask if the facility or business accepts Tricare. All CRDAMC employees (military and civilians) must provide proof of vaccination to Occupational Health to ensure compliance of healthcare vaccination. Proof needs to include the vaccine manufacturer name, Lot number, and expiration date of vaccine. All other beneficiaries should provide proof to their clinics to have the vaccination added to their shot record.