

# The season's upon us – flu season, that is...

By Jim Cornelius  
News Editor

The season's upon us. Flu season, that is.

Your Care walk-in clinic in Redmond has already reported two confirmed cases of influenza, so we know that the scourge of the fall and winter season is lurking out there in Sisters Country.

Local health practitioners recommend that people of all ages get a flu vaccination. Information released this year indicates that the nasal spray that avoids requiring patients to get stuck with a needle isn't recommended.

"The nasal spray for kids is probably not going to be effective," said Dr. Eric Wattenburg of Your Care.

He notes that the nasal spray and the shots are two different types of vaccines. He said he will be administering flu shots for younger people at the clinic.

Dr. Wattenburg urges people to go ahead and get the flu shot, even if they are concerned that they will "get the flu" from it. That's not really what happens — though some people can show moderate

symptoms after the shot.

"I'm one of 'em," Dr. Wattenburg told *The Nugget*. "I get just a little bit puny for a couple of days, a couple of days after I get the shot."

The sting of a shot and the possibility of feeling a little punky for a day or two is worth it to avoid full-blown flu, practitioners say.

"Flu is serious. Flu is unpredictable," Dr. Thomas Frieden, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters during a joint briefing last month with the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. "Flu often does not get enough respect."

In most cases, flu leads to moderate illness — but it can be very serious, especially for people with underlying health problems. Flu can kill, and Frieden noted that about 100 children die each year from flu.

Dr. May Fan of Bend Memorial Clinic says that older folks in Sisters are pretty dialed in on getting their flu shots, but younger people often are not. She thinks younger people should get the shot as well.

"It's under-utilized for the school-aged kids," she said.

Traveling is a notorious way to pick up viruses, and people who are planning to travel should get the shot before they leave on their journey, Dr. Fan says.

An Oregon Public Broadcasting report notes that "Although some questions have been raised about whether getting the flu vaccine too soon may diminish its effectiveness, federal officials recommended against anyone waiting. Similarly, some research recently questioned whether protection from the vaccine may wane more quickly among people who get vaccinated every year. But the CDC and other infectious disease specialists still advocate annual vaccination."

Not everyone wants to get a flu shot — and whether you do or not, it's possible to take action to boost your immune system to help ward off the flu.

Greg Wieland of Sisters Acupuncture Center emphasizes wellness in his practice. He notes that excessive sugar in the diet undermines

the immune system. He also urges his clients to understand the balancing of the body's pH in order to maintain a strong immune system. For example, he says, "alcohol is extremely acid-forming." That must be balanced through diet and/or supplements in order to maintain a balanced pH and optimal health.

Wieland also recommends the use of water-extract medicinal mushrooms to enhance and build the immune system.

A healthy diet, effective stress management and plenty of rest are critical to maintaining an immune system that is capable of warding off all the ailments of the season — from colds to flu.

What if you are felled by the flu?

First of all, nobody else wants your germs.

"Stay home if you're sick," says Dr. Wattenburg. "Don't go to work or school and spread it around."

Dr. Wattenburg has also seen the efficacy of the antiviral Tamiflu.

"It's effective, but you've got to get it within the first two days," he told *The*

*Nugget*.

If somebody in your household comes down with the flu, getting in to your practitioner and getting Tamiflu can reduce the severity of symptoms. It can also be used to prevent others in the household from contracting a bad case of flu themselves.

Avoiding the flu is easier said than done — if you're out in the world, you may be exposed. But it helps to wash your hands frequently, and obviously avoid contact with anyone who is coughing or has other symptoms.

**“Stay home if you're sick. Don't go to work or school and spread it around.”**  
— Dr. Eric Wattenburg

A flu shot does not make you bulletproof, but most practitioners recommend getting one. And they lead by example.

"I get it every year," Dr. Fan said in an interview last week. "In fact, I'm getting it now."



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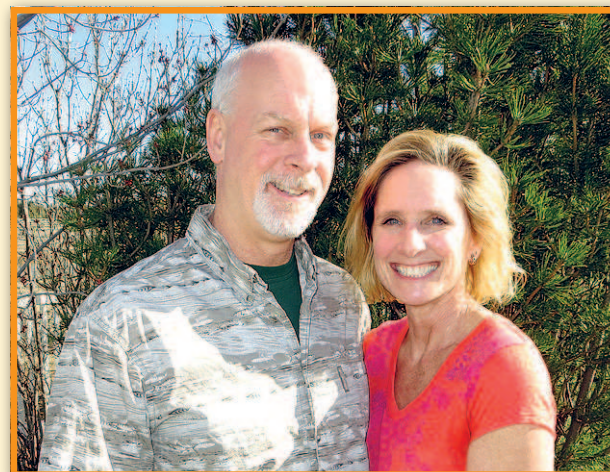
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