

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Flu Shot Season Begins

### Widespread accines recommended

(AP) -- Just about everybody needs a flu vaccine — unless you're an infant or a healthy adult hermit — but far too few of the Americans who need protection the most get it.

That's the message as flu-shot season officially began last week with a call for a record number to be inoculated — including 30 million more school-age children than ever before targeted.

"Get out there and get protected and protect others and for sure protect your children," said Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"People should start getting vaccinated now, yesterday actually," added Dr. William Schaffner, president-elect of the National Foundation for Infectious Dis-



Vaccinations can protect against the flu.

ease.

There's ample supply: 143 million to 146 million doses, more than ever before manufactured.

Flu kills about 36,000 Americans a year, and hospitalizes about 200,000.

For the first time, the CDC is advising that every child age 6 months to 18 years be inoculated, unless they have a serious egg allergy.

Worse, seemingly healthy children of any age can die from the flu — 86 last year.

## Safeway Offers Flu Vaccines

Safeway has started offering flu vaccines while supplies last. Most stores will give vaccines on a walk-in basis at in-store pharmacies, while others will conduct scheduled flu vaccine clinics.

"The beginning of the flu season is the best time to get vaccinated to ensure you are covered throughout the entire season,"

said Dave Fong, Safeway senior vice president for pharmacy.

Information about stores offering the flu vaccine can be found at safeway.com/flu or by contacting a Safeway pharmacy. Medicare Plan B participants not enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan will receive the flu vaccines at no charge.

## For Your Health

### The deadly, but preventable cancer



BY DR. NATHALIE JOHNSON

You look healthy. You feel good. So why should you be concerned about colorectal cancer?

Colorectal cancer, the second leading cancer killer among men and women, doesn't always cause symptoms. And sadly, African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed and die from it than any other racial group in Oregon (and in the U.S.). Over the past 10 years, we've lost more than 40 men and women from our community to this disease. That's even more than for breast cancer. What is most tragic about colorectal cancer is that it is often preventable!

So let's talk about it. As an African American surgeon practicing in Portland, I've seen the heartbreaking effects of this deadly cancer on patients, families and close friends in the community.

In addition, my cousin was suffering from anemia and was past the age for having it caused by the menstrual cycle. I asked her to be sure to get a colonoscopy to assure that her colon was healthy. Unfortunately, she did not. A little over a year later she was diagnosed with colon cancer that had already spread to her

perhaps our primary care doctor hasn't recommended it. And we really don't want to go to a specialist who we may not know or trust. However, by shying away from the topic, we're losing too many of our loved ones too soon.

So who should get screened? The answer is everyone age 50 and over. In fact some health professionals recommend that, because of a higher risk of colorectal cancer, African Americans should start screening tests at age 45. Don't be fooled by a lack of family history. Only about 10 percent of colorectal cancer cases occur in individuals due to their

*Everyone, regardless of gender, should get screened once they reach age 50.*

made in the later stages of the disease, when it is more difficult to treat.

There are also many common misconceptions about colorectal cancer. It is often thought that it cannot be avoided, so why get screened? Again, the fact is that screening may actually prevent this disease. Most colon and rectal cancers start with the formation of polyps. These polyps are abnormal growths that can be removed before they have a chance to develop into cancer and spread to other parts of the body.

We may put off getting screened for a lot of reasons. It's an embarrassing and personal subject. Or

genetic make-up. Plus, we may not know our family history — we don't often talk about our bodies and our health. And we don't talk easily about cancer.

For instance, someone who has died of "natural causes" may in fact have died from colorectal cancer. If there is a history of colon or rectal cancer in your family, you might need to begin screening even earlier.

As for risk factors, age is the single most important one when it comes to colorectal cancer. There is a greater likelihood for polyps to form the older we get. That is why health professionals recommend that people age 50 and older start

getting screened. In fact, most cases of colorectal cancer occur in individuals of this age group.

Since both men and women are equally likely to develop the disease, everyone, regardless of gender, should get screened once they reach age 50. Other risk factors include a high fat diet, lack of physical activity and excessive use of alcohol.

What are the tests? There are several different screening tests for colorectal cancer and precancerous polyps. Together, you and your doctor can decide which test is best for you. Screening options include a stool test, barium enema, sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy. A stool test checks for blood in the stool as a possible sign of colorectal cancer. A barium enema includes an x-ray of the colon and rectum that may find polyps. With both sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy polyps can be found and removed to prevent colorectal cancer from forming.

It's important that we in the African American community take the step to get screened. Ask about your family's health history, specifically about cancer. If you are age 50 and above or have a family history, please get screened. It is a gift you can give to yourself and your family. And, if you know someone who is at risk, urge them to get screened. It will bring peace of mind and continued health.

Dr. Nathalie Johnson works with Legacy Cancer Services at Good Samaritan Hospital.

## HEALTH WATCH

**What Every Woman Should Know about Breast Cancer** -- Wednesday, Oct. 1, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., Dr. Jone Samson and Dr. Elizabeth Steiner will discuss breast cancer risk reduction, early detection, genetic factors and more. The lecture is free and open to the public at OHSU, 3303 S.W. Bond Ave, 3rd floor.

**ED Solutions and Answers** -- Thursday, Oct. 2, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., a workshop on erectile dysfunction for men and their partners searching for effective solutions and answers to this difficult problem. Dr. Stanley Myers, urologist, will conduct this free lecture. Pre-registration required by calling 503-335-3500.

**Childbirth Preparation Class** -- Fridays, beginning Oct. 3, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., four-week class series helps first-time parents prepare for a more comfortable labor and delivery; \$85 fee per couple, to register call 503-574-6595.

**Leukemia Walk** -- A Light the Night Walk for the fight against Leukemia will be held Friday, Oct. 3 at the World Trade Center Plaza, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Pre-walk festivities will begin at 6 p.m. with your choice of a 1.8 mile or 3 mile loop beginning at 7:30 p.m. Sign up for free registration with Team Regence at teams.lightthenight.org.

**Breastfeeding Preparation Class** -- Saturday, Oct. 4 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., this class is to prepare expectant parents for the first few weeks of breastfeeding and providing solutions to common problems; \$42 fee per couple. For more information and to register, call 503-574-6595.

**Transitions to Menopause: 'What to expect, how to prepare'** -- Tuesday, Oct. 7, from noon to 1 p.m., women's health specialist Dr. Lydia H. Collins, will discuss the physiologic changes, physical symptoms and healthy transitions through nutrition, exercise and stress management; \$5 fee. For more information call 503-335-3500.

**Beating Breast Cancer, the NEXT Step** -- Tuesday, Oct. 7, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., guest speakers will focus discussions related to food, exercise, and non-traditional treatments can reduce the side effects of cancer treatments; free. For more information, call 503-574-6595.

**Managing Job Stress** -- Tuesday, Oct. 7, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., learn methods to cope with job stress and frustration; \$20 fee, to register call 503-574-6595.

**Cancer Prevention and Survival Cooking Courses** -- Thursday, Oct. 9, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., learn how to live longer by eating healthier; free. To register, call 503-256-4000.

**Infant CPR Class** -- Monday, Oct. 13, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., this class will address issues specific to infant CPR, including rescue breathing, CPR and choking maneuvers fro infant 1 to 12 months. This is a non-certifying adult-only class; \$34 fee. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Stress and the Working Parent** -- Tuesday, Oct. 14, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., learn how to balance juggling a career and family while dealing with the special challenges and concerns it presents for working parents; \$20 fee. To register, call 503-574-6595.

**Shoulder Spoilers** -- Thursday, Oct. 16, from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., learn about the most common cause of shoulder pain and dysfunction including bone spurs, labral tears and rotator cuff tears, and the latest minimally invasive treatments presented by Dr. David Huberty, free. To register, call 503-692-2411.

**Expectant Couples, New Parents** -- Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital offers the workshop Lasting Relationships for New Parents, helping couples keep their relationships strong and happy in the transition to parenthood. Presented by Northwest Family Services, upcoming sessions are scheduled Oct. 11 and Oct. 18. To register, visit lastingrelationships.org.

**Stroke Alert Screening** -- Check your carotid arteries with a painless ultrasound to assess your risk. Fee \$40. To schedule a screening, call 503-251-6137.



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