

To Your Health!

by Philip Darrah, R.Ph, Vernonia Pharmacy

Clearing up the confusion about the flu

Over the past couple of years, there have been a lot of reports in the news about the flu – avian flu, swine flu, Mexican flu, canine flu, and seasonal flu. What is the difference between all these types of flu and what are the facts?

First we need to know what the flu, or influenza, is. Influenza is a contagious virus that attacks the respiratory tract causing mild to severe illness and, at times, can lead to death. Usual symptoms include high fever, headache, extreme fatigue, dry cough, sore throat, muscle aches, runny or stuffy nose and, occasionally, gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Since all strains of the flu have similar symptoms, a culture of the virus is needed to determine the strain.

Seasonal flu is that which occurs annually starting about November and continuing through April of the following spring. Annually, over 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die in the United States from seasonal flu. There are usually three or four different strains of the seasonal flu that can occur each flu season. Each year, the CDC determines which strains will most likely occur during the flu season and develops a vaccine to protect against those strains. The seasonal flu vaccine will change from year to year and that is why revaccination each year is required to protect against the flu.

Antibiotics are not effective in treating flu. The most effective way to treat flu is by prevention:

1. Getting a flu shot is the most effective way to prevent infection.
2. Covering mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing and disposing of tissue in the trash.
3. Frequent hand washing.
4. Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth. This is how the virus enters the body.
5. Avoid those who are ill.
6. If you run a fever, stay home until the fever is gone. You are contagious only while you have a fever.

If you do contract the flu, your doctor can prescribe anti-viral drugs such as Tamiflu or Relenza, which will shorten the time you are ill and decrease the severity of your symptoms.

Now, let's talk about all the other flu viruses. First is the H1N1, or swine or Mexican flu. This is a new flu strain that originated in Mexico last year in pigs and is able to infect humans and be transmitted between humans like the seasonal flu. The H1N1 occurs sporadically, with the last major outbreak in 1977-1978. The flu pandemic of 1918 through 1920, also known as the Spanish flu, caused 50 to 100 million deaths. The Russian strain occurred from 1947 through 1957, and 1977 through 1978. Due to the long periods between outbreaks, children and young adults are most susceptible to the virus since their immune systems have never encountered the virus. A vaccine for the H1N1 is currently being tested and will be available in mid-October. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is recommending an initial vaccination, with a booster three months later.

Avian flu is a virus that affects birds, is not easily transmitted to humans and is not a concern to us at this time. Occasionally, avian flu can be transmitted to pigs where it can mutate and then be transmitted to humans, but this is rare.

The canine flu is a new influenza that affects only dogs. Humans cannot contract this virus, but it can be transmitted from one dog to another by humans who come in contact with an infected dog and carry it to another dog on their clothing or skin.

In conclusion, the key to a flu-free flu season is to get immunized, and the earlier the better. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent getting the flu, especially in those who are most susceptible, namely the very young, the very old and those with compromised immune systems.

Free flu shot clinics in Columbia Co.

The Columbia Health District Public Health will offer free flu shots in five clinics throughout Columbia County in Septem-

ber. The National Centers for Disease Control are encouraging public health departments to begin the seasonal flu shot campaign as early as possible this year. The senior centers in each community will provide the space for the free vaccination clinics, with the exception of the Clatskanie senior center and that flu clinic will be located at the Clatskanie School District Administration building.

Free flu clinics for the public are:

- Tuesday, Sept. 8, Scap-

poose Senior Center, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- Wednesday, Sept. 9, Rainier Senior Center, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- Thursday, Sept. 10, Clatskanie School District Administration, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- Friday, Sept. 11, Vernonia Senior Center, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- Monday, Sept. 14, St. Helens Senior Center, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

For those who would like to receive a flu vaccination but are unable to attend one of the above clinics, the Columbia Health District Public Health, located at 2370 Gable Road in St. Helens, will take walk-ins Monday thru Friday during the normal hours of operation, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The vaccine is for the regular seasonal flu. The H1N1, or "swine flu," vaccine is not expected to be available until October, according to the State.

For additional information, contact Columbia Health District Public Health, 503-397-4651.

Jamboree plays helped Grange

The Greenleaf Acting Company presented two works of Victorian theater during this year's Jamboree on the Vernonia Grange stage.

The curtain-opener was a one act comedy, "Phoebe Louise," by Bernard Sobel. It was followed by a Sherlock Holmes play, "The Mystery of the Speckled Band," based on the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle short story that was adapted and directed by Alberta Hardy.

Caleb Hardy was an excellent Sherlock Holmes, with his brother Ethan equally adept as Dr. Watson. The other cast members, all from three local families, performed admirably: Hailey and Sierra Jole; Juliana, Maria and Anthony Pelster; and Abraham, Margaret, Elinore, Alberta, Boaz and Benedicta Hardy.

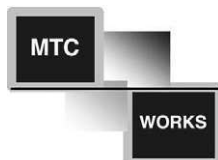
The Greenleaf Acting Company donated a quarter of the proceeds to the Vernonia Grange in appreciation for the use of the hall.

MTC Works would like to express our deepest gratitude to the many employers who gave of their time and mentoring to the youth of our communities, through the American Recovery Reinvestment Act and Oregon Youth Conservation Corp. In challenging times, your involvement gave 83 youth the opportunity to learn about various industries while earning a wage.

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