



INCREASED FLU INCIDENCE PROMPTS VACCINATION, PREVENTION REMINDERS

HICKORY, NC – In response to the rapid increase in flu incidence this season, Catawba County Public Health encourages individuals to get a flu shot and take other precautions to prevent the flu.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the predominant flu strain this season is influenza A (H3N2). Flu seasons with H3N2 as the predominant virus have been associated with more severe illness and mortality, especially in older people and young children.

The CDC has confirmed that most of the influenza A viruses circulating this season have changed slightly from the version in the vaccine. However, because the vaccine protects against multiple flu strains, vaccination can still provide protection from the flu. It may also reduce severe flu outcomes, such as hospitalization and death.

The flu vaccine is recommended for anyone 6 months or older and especially for those at higher risk for flu-related complications, including pregnant women, children, people age 65 and older, and individuals with underlying health conditions.

Along with the flu shot, Public Health encourages the use of everyday actions to help prevent the spread of flu, such as washing your hands frequently; sneezing or coughing into your elbow or a tissue; avoiding crowds; staying away from people who are sick; and staying home from work or school if you are sick.

Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms is advised to see their doctor as soon as symptoms appear in order to be evaluated for possible treatment with flu antiviral drugs. These drugs are most effective when used early, especially among people who have severe flu illness or are at higher risk for flu complications based on their age or underlying medical conditions.

To receive a flu shot, Public Health recommends contacting your medical provider or calling Public Health at (828) 695-5800 to schedule an appointment.

At Public Health, the seasonal flu shot costs \$26.00 for individuals age 3 and older and \$20.00 for children ages 6-35 months. For people 65 and older, the high-dose flu shot is available for \$40.00 and the pneumonia vaccine is available for \$80.00. Accepted forms of payment include cash, check, debit/credit, Medicare Part B (only), and Medicaid. Medicare Advantage and other insurance plans will not be accepted; however, individuals may pay and then file with their insurers for possible reimbursement.

Public Health is also scheduling appointments for flu shots through the Vaccines for Children program at no charge to eligible individuals, including:

"Leading the Way to a Healthier Community"

- Children 6 months through 18 years of age who have Medicaid or no insurance
- Women with Family Planning Waiver coverage
- Uninsured women 19 years and older who are pregnant during flu season and are being served by Catawba County Public Health, including the on-site Prenatal Clinic operated by Catawba Valley Medical Center Maternity Services

Located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., Catawba County Public Health provides health and education services to eligible men, women, and children in the community. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth.

“Leading the Way to a Healthier Community”

