



## Catawba County Public Health

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[www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth)

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### AVOID ILLNESS WITH ANNUAL FLU SHOT

October is a time for fun – from decorating for fall to spending time outdoors, playing in fallen leaves, and preparing for the excitement of Halloween. October is also the time when the flu starts to squash families' fun.

Although it's present all year, the flu ramps up in the fall and winter. It is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. From last October to May, 59 North Carolinians died from the flu. In the peak months from October to May, flu viruses are circulating at higher levels in the population, and even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. The flu can seriously affect all ages, too. In the past several years, some of the flu deaths were otherwise healthy folks in their 30s, 40s and 50s.

That's why vaccination each year is important. Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone age 3 months and older and is highly recommended for individuals who are at a higher risk for flu-related complications, including:

- Anyone with underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or chronic lung disease
- Pregnant women
- People 65 years or older
- Caregivers, especially those individuals caring for infants or people with health complications.

This year, Catawba County Public Health will offer a walk-in flu clinic on October 13 and 14 for adults and children age 3 and older. Beginning October 17, appointments for flu shots can be made by calling (828) 695-5800. This year's shots are \$27 for adults and children age 3 and older, \$20 for children ages 6-35 months, and for people 65 and older, the high-dose flu shot is available for \$48. Payment may be made by cash, check, debit/credit, Medicare Part B (only), NC Medicaid, and NC HealthChoice. Medicare Advantage and other insurance plans will not be accepted; however, individuals may pay and then file with their insurers for possible reimbursement.

Once a person is vaccinated, antibodies develop in the body in about two weeks. Those antibodies keep a person from contracting and becoming ill from the flu. The vaccine changes each year, so getting a new one before the peak season protects against the flu viruses that research indicates will be most common during flu season. Flu vaccination is the best weapon we have to protect against flu. A flu shot can have mild side effects, such as soreness or swelling where the vaccine was received, a mild fever, or body aches. While these side effects can be uncomfortable and inconvenient, they are mild and usually resolve quickly. While flu vaccine can vary in how well it works each year, the vaccine does protect against illness and can prevent serious flu outcomes like hospitalization.

For those who are not vaccinated and contract the flu, symptoms come on suddenly and can persist for several days to two weeks. Symptoms can include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, stuffy nose, muscle aches, body aches, headaches, tiredness, vomiting and diarrhea, and can land people in the hospital with complications such as pneumonia. Because anyone can get the flu and spread it before they even know they have it, it's important for everyone to get vaccinated because it can prevent the spread of the contagious illness, thus helping protect the most vulnerable people – children, the elderly, people who are already suffering from chronic illness, and pregnant women.

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In addition to obtaining a flu shot through medical providers, pharmacies or Catawba County Public Health, everyone should continue using everyday preventive actions (stay away from people who are sick, frequent, thorough handwashing, and covering coughs and sneezes).

Catawba County Public Health promotes and protects the health of all Catawba County residents through preventive services, innovative partnerships, and community health improvement initiatives. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth).

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