



The Flu: Protect Yourself and Your Family

What Is Influenza?

Influenza (Flu) infections, and hospitalizations related to this virus, will soon be on the rise in the Austin area. The prevalence of influenza typically starts in October and can extend into February or even March. This is not a 24-hour bug, but rather a serious and contagious illness. This virus can lead to bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, the worsening of current medical conditions such as asthma, and even death.

Certain populations of people such as young children, the elderly, and those with certain health conditions such as congestive heart failure, diabetes, and asthma are at an increased risk for complications from the flu.

Influenza symptoms include:

- Fever (typically high)
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore Throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle Aches

Influenza is a virus and therefore cannot be cured by antibiotics. It, however, can be treated with antivirals such as TamiFlu if caught early. The best way to beat the flu is to prevent contracting it. Influenza is spread person to person through a cough or a sneeze and some may contract it by touching a surface with the flu virus and then touching their mouth or nose. This is why it is best to practice good hand-washing and to get vaccinated. For more information please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

The Flu Vaccine:

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), a flu vaccine is recommended for everyone but is especially important for the following groups of people:

- Children ages 6 months to 5 years-old
- All pregnant women
- People over the age of 50
- People with chronic health conditions including asthma, diabetes, and congestive heart failure

The “flu shot” is an inactivated vaccine that contains the killed influenza virus. The nasal-spray flu vaccine is made with a weakened form of the live virus that does not cause the flu. The CDC provides **Key Facts about Seasonal Flu Vaccine** on their website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>.

When should you get the vaccine?

The best time to get vaccinated is **BEFORE** flu season hits, such as during September or October. Typically 2 weeks after receiving the flu vaccine, the body produces antibodies against the influenza virus. Note that this vaccine does NOT protect against flu-like illnesses that are not caused by the influenza virus.

Where Can I Get My Flu Vaccine?

Cedar Park Pediatric & Family Medicine has the vaccine available in their office now. Call 336-2777 to schedule an appointment or visit our website at www.cedarparkdoctors.com for more information on our walk-in flu clinics.

Cedar Park Pediatric and Family Medicine

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