



HEALTH NEWS FROM DR. YU

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Haven't Got the Flu Shot Yet? There's Still Time...

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Have a cough, runny nose, headache, fever and body ache? You may have the “flu.” Since April of 2009, people have been told that when you have a fever and a cough – you have “influenza like illness.” There are many viruses that cause this “influenza like illness” (ILI). Sudden fever, body ache, headache, cough, and congestion are some of the symptoms.

To detect what viruses are causing ILI, a special group of medical providers called Sentinel Physicians test patients with these symptoms. This Fall most of the ILI was due to H1N1 influenza (also known as swine flu). In the winter months, it may be difficult to tell one virus apart from another because we can have outbreaks of parainfluenza, adenovirus, respiratory syncytial virus, seasonal influenza, H1N1 and many others.

Testing for the virus does not help because the accuracy of the tests depends on when you take the test sample. In most cases, the results of the tests come back too late to help make the diagnosis. The only way we can be relatively sure you do not have the seasonal flu or the H1N1 flu is if you have received the vaccines.

Since April, we have had over 80 Thurston County residents hospitalized with H1N1 influenza, and 4 individuals have died. Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict who will get the flu. We do know that persons who are pregnant, obese, have asthma or other chronic lung disease are more likely to be severely affected. Nationwide, most of the hospitalizations for H1N1 have been in people 20 – 50, and most of the deaths have occurred in persons 20 - 64.

The virus chosen for the 2009 H1N1 vaccine is a 100% match and will provide immunity to the majority of folks who are vaccinated. The vaccine takes at least two weeks to mount enough of a response to be protective. Persons with chronic illness or impaired immunity may not respond to the vaccine as well, so it is even more important that their family members and friends are protected by vaccine so that they do not pass the disease to these loved ones.

It is not too late to get your flu shot. We will likely see a third wave of influenza illness this winter in our area and the United States.

Thurston County has broadened the use of H1N1 vaccine to include all persons age 6 months and older - regardless of whether or not they are at higher risk for complications from H1N1 flu. For a list of where to find the H1N1 vaccine in Thurston County, see www.co.thurston.wa.us/health or call the recorded information line at 360-709-3080.

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