



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™

News Release

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Amarillo Health Care Community Comes Together to Encourage Flu Vaccinations

AMARILLO, TX – Health care practitioners are encouraging members of the community to get their flu vaccinations now. Influenza can be a very serious illness at any time, especially for the elderly, immunocompromised individuals or those individuals with pre-existing conditions.

“This year it is especially important to receive a flu vaccination because of the high risk of acquiring a coronavirus infection at the same time as having influenza,” Richard Jordan, M.D., Regional Dean of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine said. “The severity of each illness is magnified if someone has acquired both infections. Even young and active individuals may end up in the intensive care unit on a respirator if both infections occur together.”

The City of Amarillo Department of Public Health and Northwest Texas Healthcare Systems (NWTHS) echo the importance of everyone doing their part by getting their flu shots this fall.

“Most years our health care system can handle the flu season and increased patient numbers with little difficulty,” Brian Weis, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of NWTHS said. “However, with a pandemic, the stress on our emergency rooms, our hospitals and our intensive care units has been considerable. People getting their flu vaccinations will greatly help prevent additional stress on the hospital system.”

“The message for all of us is—we don’t care where you get your vaccine, but we want you to get it sooner rather than later,” Jordan said.

Experts say the effectiveness of the vaccine is similar to what has been seen during the last decade-- approximately 45% effective against influenza A and 50% effective against influenza B. The CDC recommends getting the flu vaccination by the end of October or as soon as current vaccinations are available. Flu vaccines are currently available in the Panhandle.

“It’s important to overcome the fear of coronavirus exposure to go to a health care provider, a pharmacy or the public health department to receive a flu vaccination. These providers will

take great care to follow all safety protocols,” Jordan said. “The risk of acquiring coronavirus from exposure in these settings is very small. It is a much greater risk to not get a flu vaccination.”

Both COVID-19 and flu can result in complications, including:

- Pneumonia
- Respiratory failure
- Acute respiratory distress syndrome (i.e. fluid in lungs)
- Sepsis
- Cardiac injury (e.g. heart attacks and stroke)
- Multiple-organ failure (respiratory failure, kidney failure, shock)
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions involving the lungs, heart, nervous system or diabetes
- Inflammation of the heart, brain or muscle tissues
- Secondary bacterial infections (i.e. infections that occur in people who have already been infected with flu or COVID-19)

The CDC recommends that everyone six months of age and older get a flu vaccine every season, especially people who are considered [high risk](#). It is important to avoid close contact with people who are sick, cover coughs and sneezes, wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and avoid touching eyes, nose and the mouth. Experts encourage people to disinfect high-touch surfaces in common areas.