

Flu is here

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 03 January 2013 14:36 -

Medical officials say it's not too late to get immunized

The flu bug has bitten in Gothenburg.

Shortly after Thanksgiving, medical officials said they've seen an increase in the number of patients testing positive for both influenza A and B.

On Friday, Dr. Craig Bartruff, owner of Gothenburg Medical Clinic, said he started seeing patients with respiratory problems earlier than usual this year but it's been worse through the holiday season.

At Gothenburg Family Practice, physician assistant Aaron Salomon has handled the bulk of patients with the flu.

Since Dec. 6, Salomon said the clinic has seen about 20 patients with the flu.

The bulk of those patients hadn't had the flu vaccine which immunizes against both influenza A and B.

"It's a killed virus so you don't get ill," Salomon said, noting antibodies form three to four weeks after receiving the shot.

Flu symptoms include a fever, severe body ache, fatigue and a dry, hacking cough.

Both Bartruff and Salomon advised that the very young (under 2 years of age) and elderly receive a second vaccine because their bodies don't often form adequate antibodies.

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Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Protection said everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year to expand protection against the flu to more people.

Medical officials also encourage people to get the vaccine as early as September.

“You never know when the flu season is gong to hit,” Salomon said. “It can be as early as November or as late as February.”

One vaccine is sufficient for most people unless they are very young or old or have other health complications such as diabetes or heart disease, Bartruff said.

Once exposed to the flu, Salomon said a product called Tamiflu can be used to reduce the ability of the virus to replicate.

“So your immune system has a better chance of fighting it off,” he said, noting that the best results show up in patients who have had symptoms for less than 48 hours or to prevent influenza in people who may be exposed but do not yet have symptoms. “The flu season is going to get a lot worse and could last through February.”

In addition to the availability of the vaccine at both medical clinics, pharmacists at both Gothenburg Discount Pharmacy and the Shopko Hometown Pharmacy offer shots.

This is the first year pharmacists at Gothenburg Discount Pharmacy have given flu vaccinations and the fourth year for Shelley Nickerson at Shopko Hometown, formerly Pamida.

Pharmacists who give shots must be trained and certified.

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Also in circulation is a virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea completely unrelated to the flu for which people are vaccinated.

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