Protect Yourself Against the Flu!

February 14, 2017

To UWRF students, faculty, and staff,

Please spread the word! Influenza season has arrived later than in past years. Both Minnesota and Wisconsin have had an increased count of confirmed influenza A and influenza B and there are confirmed cases in our community. Below is information about how to prevent or help lessen the impact of influenza.

Get a Flu Vaccine!
One of the best ways to avoid getting influenza is to get an annual flu (influenza) shot (see below for where persons can obtain influenza vaccines for the 2016-2017 influenza season). All people 6 months and older who do not have contraindications are now recommended to receive annual influenza vaccination. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that influenza vaccination begin as soon as vaccine becomes available in the community and continue throughout the flu season. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza. When more people get vaccinated against the flu, less flu can spread through that community.

Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs that cause influenza and colds, and other illnesses as well.

- **Practice other good health habits, such as cleaning shared work spaces with disinfectant between users.** Also get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

- **Practice good hand hygiene** by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.** If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder; not into your hands.

- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

- **Stay Home When You Are Sick.** If you have these symptoms, you should stay home, meaning do not go to classes or work for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever.

Flu symptoms may include fever, coughing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches, chills, and fatigue, and vomiting and diarrhea may also occur. If you have these
influenza/influenza-like symptoms, you should stay home, meaning do not go to classes or work for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever. Ask a roommate, friend, or family member to check up on you and to bring you food and supplies if needed. For students living in the residence halls, isolation meals can be arranged for by going to https://www.uwrf.edu/DiningServices/IsolationMealBoxRequest.cfm or calling 715/425-4444 and asking for Dining Services. Disposable thermometers are available at each residence hall front desk and the Student Health Services office at 211 Hagestad Hall. Free cold/flu kits, with helpful information and supplies, are also available in the Student Health Services office. For students who have these influenza/influenza-like symptoms, contact your instructors to let them know you will not be in class. You are expected to make arrangements to retrieve class notes from a peer and complete all missed work in a reasonable time frame. Communicate with your instructor if you have questions.

In most cases, **healthy individuals who develop influenza/influenza-like symptoms do not need to seek medical attention.** Those with underlying medical conditions who develop influenza/influenza-like symptoms should contact their health care provider. Health care providers generally offer anti-virals only if the flu symptoms have been present for less than 48 hours and only encourage taking anti-virals if the patient is frail such as very young or very old or they have an underlying medical condition. Anti-virals may shorten the course and/or lessen the symptoms of influenza but only if started early and, as with any medication, can have unpleasant side effects.

**Below is information about where persons can obtain influenza vaccines for the 2016-2017 influenza season, and where to go for more information about seasonal influenza.**

Per the CDC, “The nasal spray flu vaccine (live attenuated influenza vaccine or LAIV) should not be used during 2016-2017,” in light of concerns regarding low effectiveness for certain strains of influenza. Traditional flu vaccines (called "trivalent" vaccines) are made to protect against three flu viruses; an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus, and an influenza B virus. There are also flu vaccines made to protect against four flu viruses (called "quadrivalent" vaccines). These vaccines protect against the same viruses as the trivalent vaccine and an additional B virus.

Influenza shots are covered by Student Health Services at Vibrant Health Family Clinics in River Falls for current students (FluMist, the intranasal influenza vaccine, has been covered but is not recommended and not available for the 2016-2017 influenza season). UWRF students must call ahead for an appointment to Vibrant Health Family Clinics in River Falls at 715-425-6701 (Taxi rides to and from covered for students by Student Health Services, call 715-425-7878) or students may also contact their own health care provider if they wish. UWRF faculty and staff should contact their health care provider.

**Seasonal Influenza Vaccines Also Available:**
Seasonal influenza vaccines are also currently available through both Pierce County Public Health Department (715-273-6755) for $32 (quadrivalent) and Saint Croix County Public Health Department (715-246-8263) for $35 (quadrivalent). Please call for more information.
Vibrant Health Family Clinics in River Falls is currently offering seasonal influenza shots for $35 (quadrivalent), as well as Fluzone High-Dose for persons 65 years or older ($35). Again, influenza shots are covered by Student Health Services at Vibrant Health Family Clinics in River Falls for current UWRF students. Persons must call ahead to 715-425-6701 to schedule an appointment.

The following pharmacies in River Falls are offering seasonal influenza shots and will bill insurances:

- **Shopko Pharmacy (715-425-6272) (1777 Paulson Road, River Falls):** and $29.99 for quadrivalent, no appointment necessary, age 6 and older. High dose (age 65 and older) $49.99
- **Walgreens Pharmacy (715-426-4089) (1047 N. Main Street, River Falls):** $31.99 for trivalent flu shots, age 7 and older; $39.99 for quadrivalent; $59.99 for high dose (age 65 and older, usually covered by Medicare part B), all are walk-ins only


**For more information about University’s response to emergencies**, go to [http://www.uwrf.edu/Emergency/](http://www.uwrf.edu/Emergency/). The University does have an up-to-date pandemic influenza campus plan. For more information or questions, contact Student Health Services at 715-425-3293 ([http://www.uwrf.edu/StudentHealthAndCounseling/](http://www.uwrf.edu/StudentHealthAndCounseling/)).

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