



# Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

## Say Shoo to the Flu!

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Just when you start forgetting about the nuisance, it circles back for its annual appearance. Flu season is almost here.

Influenza, or 'flu,' is caused by a virus that is spread through respiratory droplets in the air and on surfaces when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. There are a few ways these droplets enter another person's body. Someone can breathe them in or they can touch the eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a surface where infected respiratory secretions landed. Once a person is infected, symptoms usually begin to appear within one to four days and can last for up to two weeks. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, and occasionally diarrhea and vomiting.

While most people who get the flu will have an uncomfortable but relatively mild illness, others are at high risk for severe illness and even death. Those people include infants, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with other illnesses that affect the ability to fight off diseases, such as cancer or autoimmune disorders. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that on average, 36,000 people will die each year from the flu or flu-related complications. In addition, people infected with the flu are more likely to develop bacterial pneumonia. People in those high risk groups should also be screened to determine if they should get the pneumonia vaccine.

There are effective ways to prevent catching or spreading the flu. Important prevention activities include: washing your hands frequently, especially if you are sick, coughing or sneezing into a tissue or a sleeve and throwing used tissues away, staying home if you are sick so you don't spread germs and getting an annual flu vaccination.

According to the CDC, the flu vaccine effectively prevents flu infection for most people, and can lessen the severity of the illness in those for whom it doesn't provide complete protection.

Everyone over the age of 6 months is encouraged to get a flu vaccination each year. Yearly vaccinations are necessary because flu viruses tend to change over time, which means that the vaccine will have to change along with the viruses in order to be effective. The vaccine is now available in three different forms: a shot in the muscle, a nasal spray, and a shot under the skin. However, at Fort Carson, only the shot in the muscle and nasal spray will be offered.



Evans Army Community Hospital Preventive Medicine will host seasonal influenza immunization clinics for all TRICARE beneficiaries aged 6 months and up who need only a flu vaccination. The clinics will be held at the Family Readiness Center, building 6237 on Mekong Street on the follow dates:

Monday, October 15th through Friday, October 19th, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saturday, October 20th, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tuesday, October 23rd through Friday, October 26th, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Vaccinations can also be obtained during visits to your primary care provider or during established immunization clinic walk-in times.

Active Duty Service Members will be vaccinated through their units or medical personnel.

Retirees may also be vaccinated during Retiree Appreciation Day on Saturday, October 13th, 2012, from 8 a.m. - noon.

For more information on influenza and vaccinations, a flu information recorded message is available at 719-526-6422 or [http://www.evans.amedd.army.mil/PM/flu\\_information.htm](http://www.evans.amedd.army.mil/PM/flu_information.htm)

General influenza information is also available at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).