



Press Release
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Flu and Other Respiratory Illnesses Increasing Across the Nation

Preventative measures, like vaccinations, may help reduce complications should you become infected.

KNOX CITY, Texas (Dec. 8, 2023) – “It is never too late to get your annual flu shot, and now is a perfect time,” says Ruth Ebangit, MD, Board-Certified Family Practice Physician who recently began seeing patients at Knox City Clinic. “The sooner in the flu season that you get vaccinated, the more time your body has to build immunity before we reach the height of the flu season.”

Flu hospitalization rates are climbing in the United States as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there have already been over 7,000 flu-related hospitalizations this year. While a flu outbreak in Knox County has not yet occurred, local medical professionals urge eligible individuals to get vaccinated immediately.

Respiratory syncytial virus infection (RSV) has increasingly become a concern among many in the medical community as infection waves started earlier than usual.

While not a new virus, RSV has spread faster and broader than in previous years. Anyone can contract the virus, but babies, children under five, seniors, and immunocompromised individuals are especially vulnerable.

“If you are feeling ill, it is important to stay home, wear masks around others, and call your local medical clinic,” says Dr. Ebangit. “Your local medical clinician can best advise of the next steps and additional precautions you should take based on symptoms.”

So how can you protect yourself and your loved ones during the fall and upcoming winter seasons? Dr. Ebangit agrees with the CDC that everyone six months and older gets vaccinated.

It is estimated that 51 percent of the U.S. population got a flu shot last year. This year, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases released a study that suggests that percentage will decline this year. The foundation reports that one in five at higher risk for influenza-related complications say they will not get vaccinated.

“Getting the flu shot each year is important because prominent strains of the virus are constantly changing,” Dr. Ebangit explains. “It is because of this that vaccinations are reviewed yearly and updated as appropriate to better match flu viruses expected to spread in the U.S. this season.”

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Flu vaccines in the U.S. are quadrivalent, meaning they are designed to protect against the four flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to spread.

It is possible to have flu and other respiratory illnesses such as RSV and COVID-19 simultaneously. Some of the symptoms are similar, making it hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. From a clinical standpoint, determining whether an individual is infected with the flu, COVID-19, RSV, or another virus can be hard to determine without lab work. Symptoms of respiratory illnesses can be similar, which may include fever, chills, coughing, and muscle and body aches.

While it is still possible for someone who has received a flu shot or COVID-19 vaccine to contract the virus, symptoms in such cases are typically less severe than those who have not been vaccinated.

The best way to reduce your risk of illness and its potentially serious complications is to get a flu vaccine each year for everyone six months and older. Wearing face masks and physical distancing can help protect you and others from respiratory illnesses.

Individuals interested in getting the flu shot are encouraged to stop by Knox City Clinic or Munday Clinic. Insurance plans are accepted, and a self-pay option is available for only \$25 per shot. Insured patients are asked to bring their insurance cards.

For more information about local healthcare programs and services, please call the Knox City Clinic at 940-657-3906 or the Munday Clinic 940-422-5271.

About Knox County Hospital District

Founded in 1926, Knox County Hospital District provides healthcare for residents of Knox County and surrounding areas. The district offers a wealth of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, advanced radiology services, a clinical laboratory, home health, physical therapy, long-term care, patient education, and more. For additional information, please call 940-657-3535 or visit www.knoxhospital.org.

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