



## Get Your Flu Vaccine: Stay Healthy This Flu Season!

Flu seasons are unpredictable and can start early or run late, and the flu vaccine provides protection that lasts through a full flu season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a three-step approach to protect against the flu:

- Take time to get a flu vaccine
- Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs (*including frequent hand washing and staying home when sick*); and
- Take flu antiviral drugs when your doctor prescribes them

Vaccination of high risk persons is especially important to decrease their risk of severe flu illness. People at high risk of serious flu complications include young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health

conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease and people 65 years and older. Vaccination also is important for health care workers, and other people who live with or care for high risk people to keep from spreading flu to high risk people.

Getting a flu vaccine is the single best way to protect against the flu. Flu vaccines are available now and you can get your vaccine at many places including your local health department, vaccination clinics, doctors' office, retail pharmacies, and some workplaces.

Colts Neck Health Department flu clinics will be run from October through November 2010 in various locations. For flu clinic schedule please call our office at 732-446-8347 or visit our website our at: [www.mtnj.org](http://www.mtnj.org).

## Cholesterol Management

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body and many foods. Your body needs cholesterol to function normally and makes all that you need.

More than 102 million American adults (20 years or older) have total cholesterol levels at or above 200 mg/dL, which is above healthy levels. More than 35 million of these people have levels of 240 mg/dL or higher, which puts them at high risk for heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States. High

cholesterol usually doesn't have any symptoms. As a result, many people do not know that their cholesterol levels are too high. Too much cholesterol can build up in your arteries. After a while, these deposits narrow your arteries, putting you at risk for heart disease and stroke.

However, you can have a simple blood test to check your cholesterol. High cholesterol can be controlled through lifestyle changes or if that is not enough, through medications. Your diet, weight, physical activity,

and exposure to tobacco all can affect your cholesterol levels. All of these factors can be controlled:

- Eating a healthy diet- A diet rich in vegetables, whole grains, higher fiber foods, lean meat & poultry, (foods that are low in saturated & trans fats, and cholesterol).
- Participating in regular physical activity such as walking, dancing, jogging, or swimming.
- Avoiding tobacco smoke.

## Protect Yourself against Shingles: Get Vaccinated

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is a disease that causes a painful skin rash. In addition, shingles can lead to severe pain that can last for months or even years, a condition known as post-herpetic neuralgia. Shingles can lead to other serious complications as well, including eye problems (when shingles affects the eye) and, more rarely, pneumonia, hearing problems, blindness, and brain inflammation (encephalitis). In rare cases, shingles can also lead to death.

Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus (VZV), the same virus that causes chickenpox. After a person recovers from chickenpox, the virus stays in the body in a dormant state. For reasons that are not fully known, the virus can reactivate years later, causing shingles.

Almost one out of three people in America will develop shingles during his or her lifetime. Last year, nearly 1 million Americans experienced the condition. Older people are at greater risk of developing shingles; about half of all cases occur among men and women 60 years old or older.

Shingles cannot be passed from one person to another. However, a person with active shingles can transmit the virus that causes shingles, VZV, to a person who has never had chickenpox – but only through direct contact with the shingles rash. If a person who has never had chickenpox is infected with VZV, he or she will develop chickenpox, not shingles.

The only way to reduce the risk of developing shingles and the long-term pain that can follow shingles is to get vaccinated. Adults 60 years old or older can receive a single dose of the shingles vaccine, called Zostavax®. Some people in this age group should wait to get vaccinated, or should not get vaccinated at all, if they have certain medical conditions, particularly if they have a weakened immune system.

## Staying Active during the colder months

Fall brings many unique opportunities to be active. The beauty of the changing leaves and lingering sunshine of still-long days set the stage for afternoon hikes and evening walks.

Comfortable temperatures tempt us to head outside and enjoy fall festivals and an array of fall outdoor activities. Kids of all ages enjoy running through the fallen leaves. This is a good time to focus on the social benefits of physical activity so share the beauty of the great out-

doors and the many fall events with your family. Here are some things you can do to stay active with your family:

- Take in the fall festivals, craft shows and themed events that many communities offer.
- Support a worthwhile cause – participate as a family in an active fundraising event – walk, run, cycle or in-line skate for charity while improving your own health.

- Enjoy a scenic bike ride, walk or hike in or around your community.
- Visit a pick-your-own farm for seasonal vegetables.
- Visit local farms to pick your own pumpkins, or simply wander around and enjoy the sights and sounds.
- Don't forget the time-honored tradition of raking leaves and then jumping in the piles.

## Efficient Light Bulbs

Many people want to go green and are using energy-efficient light bulbs. One of the better choices is compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). They save money and protect the environment.

CFLs were developed in the 1980s, but have gained popularity in recent years. They are somewhat more expensive than incandescent bulbs,

(about \$ 2.50 per bulb), but they are 4 times more powerful, and are 75 percent more energy efficient and last longer than incandescent bulbs.

There are some disadvantages to using CFLs. They may flicker a bit, take time to come to full brightness and cannot be used with a traditional dimmer switch or in some lamps. They contain mercury, and

have to be disposed of properly. CFLs have an average life time of 7 years and the bulb will use about \$25 worth of electricity compare to incandescent light bulbs, which use \$96 worth of electricity and will need to be replaced about eight times in 7 years, for a total cost of \$100. CFL is a better bargain for your wallet and the environment.