

Time for that flu shot!

Fever, cough, muscle aches. It's influenza season. Don't despair. There is a way to dodge the dreaded illness.

Jacobson Memorial Hospital Care Center urges anyone from 6 months old and older to get a flu shot as soon as possible to not only avoid getting the influenza, but to keep it from spreading to your family.

"You should get it as soon as it's available, but it's never too late to be vaccinated," advises Dr. Deepak M. Goyal, medical director at Jacobson Memorial Hospital Care Center (JMHCC).

JMHCC and its affiliated clinics, the Elgin Community Clinic and Glen Ullin Family Medical Clinic, have flu vaccine available.

North Dakota averages 2,800 influenza cases a year, according to Jill Baber, influenza surveillance coordinator for the N.D. Department of Health.

All influenza vaccinations contain protection from the 2009 H1N1 pandemic strain, along with influenza A H3N2 and an influenza B strain.

A vaccination is necessary every year to protect against the flu virus, Dr. Goyal says.

Those between 2 and 8 years old should receive the nasal flu vaccine over the injectable if it's available.

A yearly vaccination is the most effective way to avoid the flu. While you may still get the flu after having a vaccination, research shows that even if you do get the flu after getting a flu shot, it is less likely to be as severe.

A common misconception is that people contract influenza from the vaccination.

"That's impossible," Dr. Goyal says. "You won't get the flu from the shot."

In addition to vaccination, Dr Goyal also recommends frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when you are sick to prevent spread of influenza. Common signs and symptoms of influenza include abrupt onset of fever, muscle aches, sore throat and cough.

"Please encourage your loved ones to get a flu shot as soon as possible, as it takes around two weeks for the body to develop immunity," Dr. Goyal says.