

WHAT'S HAPPENING

A newsletter for the Maine Medical Center family

MMC's Family Birth Center Welcomes Its First Baby of 2019



It's a boy! Maine Medical Center's Family Birth Center had reason to celebrate Jan. 1 when Anna McGuckin and Jarlath McGuckin of Portland welcomed their first child, Lev, at 12:21 a.m. Both Anna and Lev are in good health.

Flu Update With Hospital Epidemiologist August Valenti, MD

Every year, we receive a lot of questions about the severity of the flu season and the best ways to protect yourself. Maine Medical Center's care teams receive regular updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) about the flu and follow evidence-based protocols to prevent spread of the disease. Maine Medical Center's Hospital Epidemiologist, August Valenti, MD, answers some of our most frequently asked questions about this year's flu season.

How bad is this year's flu season?

The 2018-2019 influenza season officially began on Sept. 30. As of the end of Dec. 2018, this year's flu season has not been as active in Maine as it was last year at this time. However, we are seeing flu in Maine, and it is still too early to tell what the flu season will look like. The Maine CDC is recommending everyone over the age of 6 months be vaccinated against the flu.

Is this year's flu vaccine effective?

The effectiveness of the flu vaccine varies from year to year, but vaccination is always your best defense against flu. This year's vaccine protects against four different strains of the virus (except the high-dose vaccine recommended for the elderly that only contains three strains), including H1N1, the strain that has been predominant so far this season. There may be other strains of influenza that will circulate, and no

vaccine is 100 percent effective. But vaccination can both prevent the flu and reduce its severity.

Is it too late to get the flu shot?

Absolutely not. The Maine CDC continues to recommend everyone over the age of 6 months be vaccinated against the flu if they haven't been already.

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'Flu FAQ' From Front

Getting your flu shot now ensures that you will be better protected for the rest of flu season.

Where do I get a flu shot?

Most people can get a flu shot through their primary care provider. Flu shots are currently available at all Maine Medical Partners primary care offices and pediatric clinics. Many pharmacies also provide flu shots to adults, though MMC's hospital pharmacy does not.

What precautions does Maine Medical Center take to reduce the spread of flu?

Maine Medical Center has a standard, multifaceted response to any active flu season.

We provide free flu shot clinics for our employees and require all employees to receive a flu shot, provide documentation of a vaccination received elsewhere, or complete and submit a declination form. During flu season, employees who have not been vaccinated must wear masks when providing patient care.

We have signs throughout the hospital to remind patients and visitors about the importance of good hand

hygiene. They encourage hand washing and the use of sanitizer, and they discourage those with respiratory illnesses from visiting patients.

Our care teams also follow our routine infection control practices:

- Ensuring patients with respiratory illnesses are placed on appropriate precautions
- Cleaning their work areas with appropriate disinfectants
- Staying home if they are sick
- Receiving a flu vaccine or wearing a mask when interacting with patients

What can I do to prevent the spread of flu?

Vaccination remains the best protection against the flu. Also, practice good hand hygiene:

- Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer
- Keep your hands away from your face
- Sneeze into a tissue, then throw it away immediately and wash your hands
- If tissues aren't available, sneeze into your elbow
- Stay home if you're sick
- Wipe down work place surfaces and equipment regularly, especially if

someone you know has been sick has visited.

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Remain hydrated and eat well.

How do I know if I have the flu?

Common symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)

It is possible to have vomiting and diarrhea with the flu, but it is uncommon in adults. Other viruses, such as norovirus, are more likely the cause.

What should I do if I get the flu?

Most people simply need to rest at home and drink plenty of fluids. The CDC recommends that you remain at home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of medication.

If you get the flu and are at high risk for complications because of your age or medical condition, you should contact your health care provider.

You should seek immediate medical attention if you have the following symptoms

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

Is there medication that can treat the flu?

Antiviral drugs can ease symptoms and shorten the time that you are sick with the flu by a day or two.



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