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 and vaccines.

**When does flu season start?**

The 2018-2019 influenza season officially began on Sept. 30. The Maine CDC is recommending everyone over the age of 6 months be vaccinated against the flu before the end of October, as influenza is already present in the state.

**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. 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.

**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. To see a list of adult and family medicine practices, click here. You can find a list of Maine Medical Partners – Pediatrics locations here. Many pharmacies also provide flu shots to adults, though MMC’s hospital pharmacy does not.

**I’ve heard there are a few different kinds of vaccines? How do I know which one I should get?**

Most people will receive what’s known as a quadrivalent vaccine, meaning it protects against four types of flu. Those 65 and older may receive a high-dose trivalent vaccine instead. The higher dose may do a better job protecting seniors. If you are over the age of 65, we encourage you to talk to your doctor about which flu shot is the best one for you.

The CDC has approved both a nasal vaccine and an injectable vaccine for children this year. Last year a nasal vaccine was not available. In general, Maine Medical Center pediatricians recommend the injection, but parents should talk to their child’s pediatrician to determine what is best for their family.

You can learn more information about how to protect yourself at www.cdc.gov/flu.
**October Anniversaries**

**40 Years**
Ann Marie Branigan, OB/GYN  
Deborah Letarte, Maternal Fetal Medicine  
Cindy Rahkonen, Coding  
Roxanne Rogers, Cardiology  
Bruce Small, Distribution

**35 Years**
Deborah Barris, Radiology  
Nancy Bickford, NICU  
Gregory Warming, Food Services  
Tina Whipkey, PCS Administration  
Vladimir Wormwood, Cardiac Surgery

**30 Years**
Gayle Barstow, R1  
Candace Bragdon, Patient Access  
James Coyle, EVS  
Barb Heyl, Cardiac Surgery  
Jill Holden, Urology  
Steven McGrath, Pulmonary Medicine  
Charlene Ward, MaineHealth ACO

**25 Years**
Karen Gurney, MMP Administration  
Kenneth Lombard, MMP Chief Medical Officer  
Arlene McCormick-Miller, Continuing Care Nursery  
Laurie Nadeau, Patient Access

**20 Years**
Debra Raspiller, MaineHealth Systems & Development  
Ray Esperanza, Linen Distribution  
Marilyn Flanders, R5  
Donna Gilbert, Employee Health  
Merissa Harmon, R7  
Melanie Krum, ASU  
Meridy Lippoldt, Vocational Services  
Yegana Mammadova, Health Information Management  
Edith Okenquist, Coding  
Susan Perron, IS  
Amugimo Rasu, EVS  
Barbara Skop, Admitting

**15 Years**
Faduma Ali, EVS  
Kathleen Berube, Volunteer Services  
Sara Bourgoin, Nursing Floats  
Cynthia Dexter, OB/GYN  
Meagan Dick, BBCH  
Elena Hassan, Interpreter Services  
Michele Higgins, P3CD  
Julia Koger, Nursing Floats  
Juanita McDonald, R5  
Kari Oldmixon, Otolaryngology  
Matthew Parc, R5  
Efren Ramos, EVS  
Sharlene Smith, PCS Administration

**10 Years**
Gail Atwood, Scarborough Primary Care  
Helene Boucher, R4  
Timothy Daigle, Food Services  
Erika Dempsey, Cardiothoracic ICU  
Heidi Dobson, Sterile Processing  
Kelly Dunham, P3CD  
Erin Dustin, Med Staff  
Martha Gamache, MMP Surgical Care Casco Bay  
Xianghua Han, MMCRI  
Ahmed Hassan, Interpreter Services  
Erica Paulette, Radiology  
Mihoko Richards, ASU  
Victoria Spaltro, Switchboard  
Aaron Splint, Cardiology  
Aleksandra Vujanic, Endocrinology & Diabetes  
Paul White, Pulmonary Medicine  
Danielle Wildes, Pharmacy

**5 Years**
Melissa Chadbourne, R6  
Savannah DeFelice, Pulmonary Medicine  
John Dudley, Otolaryngology  
Ryan Ellis, EVS  
Elizabeth Emmons, ED Nursing  
Aaron Flint, General Mechanical  
Martha Grealey, Pediatric Specialty Care  
Briana Hailey, Orthopedics  
Judy Jurevic, Finance  
Vanessa Kearns, South Portland Pediatrics  
Mathew Leo, General Mechanical  
Chelsea Lussier, Patient Access  
Robert Mayberry, EVS  
Kristine McDonald, Westbrook Primary Care  
Tasha Moody, Brighton Pain Center  
Christine Nielsen, Portland Pediatrics  
Erica Paulette, Radiology  
Mihoko Richards, ASU  
Victoria Spaltro, Switchboard  
Aaron Splint, Cardiology  
Aleksandra Vujanic, Endocrinology & Diabetes  
Paul White, Pulmonary Medicine  
Danielle Wildes, Pharmacy

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