FAQ (frequently asked questions)

Flu Prevention & Treatment

How can I prevent the spread of flu?
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue, or sleeve, when you cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol hand sanitizer often
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Get a flu shot

What are the symptoms of the flu?
Symptoms include fever, sore throat, muscle aches, runny nose, headache, cough and fatigue.

If I get sick, how do I know when I’m contagious and when I can come back to work?
You are contagious starting one day before your symptoms first appear. It’s recommended that you stay at home until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

How can I take care of myself at home?
Get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids (such as water) and take medications to help lower your temperature such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®).
Are antibiotics effective against the flu?
No. Antibiotics are effective against bacterial infections. Influenza and most cases of acute bronchitis (another name for a "chest cold") are caused by viruses. Doctors will sometimes treat the flu and bronchitis with antiviral medications. But antibiotics can’t treat these conditions, prevent their spread, or ease their symptoms. It’s important to use antibiotics only when they’re necessary, because bacteria can develop resistance to antibiotics over time. You can help keep antibiotics effective by not taking them to treat the flu, bronchitis or other viral infections.

Is there medicine available to treat the flu?
Yes, they are called antivirals. Antivirals are medications that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antivirals can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. Antiviral medications used to treat the flu work best when started within 48 hours after your symptoms begin. They may also prevent serious flu complications. This fall, antivirals may be prioritized for persons with severe illness or those at higher risk for flu complications. Check with your doctor to see if you are at high risk.

Should I be concerned about the flu?
Pregnant women and children and adults who have a condition such as asthma or diabetes or who have a suppressed immune system for any reason are at highest risk of developing complications from the flu.

For more about the flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) site.
Seasonal Flu Shots

Do I need both a seasonal and H1N1 flu shot this year?
No. The seasonal flu shot covers several strains this year, including H1N1. For everyone over age 9, only ONE shot is needed.

If my child is under the age of 9, will he/she need two seasonal flu shots?
Children under 9 who meet any of the criteria below will need two doses of seasonal flu vaccine to get the best protection:

- If this is the first year your child received seasonal flu vaccine
- If last year was the first time your child received seasonal flu vaccine AND had only one dose last year
- If your child did not get an H1N1 (“swine flu”) vaccine in 2009 or 2010

How do I get a seasonal flu shot?
HealthPartners Clinic patients can receive a seasonal flu shot in one of several ways:

- Nurse appointments: call your clinics appointment scheduling number to schedule a nurse flu vaccine appointment
- Add on to a previously scheduled appointment: request to add a seasonal flu shot at your next clinic appointment
- Walk-in visits at HealthPartners Quick Clinic: if you live or work near Woodbury, you can receive a seasonal flu vaccine at our walk-in HealthPartners Quick Clinic. It is located within our Woodbury Clinic and is open 5-9 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. No appointments are necessary.

Can I get the flu from a flu shot?
No. Some people may have some aches or a slight fever after a flu shot but this is not influenza. The most common side effects are slight soreness around the injection site for a short time.

Can I have allergic reactions to a flu shot?
Serious allergic reactions to a flu shot are rare, but if you have ever had Guillain Barre Syndrome or a serious allergic reaction to eggs, thimerosal or a previous flu shot, check with your doctor to make sure a flu shot is safe for you.

When should I get a flu shot?
You can get a flu vaccination as early as you want and it will protect you for the entire flu season.
I've heard about a nasal mist version of the flu vaccine, can you tell me more?
The nasal mist vaccine was developed for persons 2-49 years and is inhaled rather than being injected like a traditional shot. Not all sites may have nasal mist, so if you want the vaccine in this form please call ahead to make sure they carry it. Most HealthPartners Clinics have nasal mist. If you have questions regarding the best vaccine form for you, please talk with your doctor.

Are flu shots covered by insurance?
Most HealthPartners plans cover preventive care 100 percent, and since flu shots are considered preventive care they would be fully covered. However, you should check your plan documents or call Member Services to find out for sure.

What do I wear for a flu shot?
Please wear a shirt or blouse that has short sleeves or is loose enough to roll up so that the shot can be given in your upper arm.

Visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) site for more FAQ on seasonal flu shots.