

FLU FACTS

Who should get the flu vaccine? The best answer now is “Who shouldn’t?”

This year the Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone six months of age and older should get the flu (influenza) vaccine.

This expands recommendations to include healthy young adults, one of the groups hardest hit by the H1N1 pandemic last year. It is especially important for people who are at risk for complications— young children, pregnant women, people 50 years or older, people with diabetes, heart, lung and kidney disease, and those who live in nursing homes. Exceptions apply if you are allergic to eggs or your doctor recommends against it because of certain pre-existing conditions.

“A flu vaccine is simply the best way to protect against the flu,” says Dr. Sarah Haessler from the Infectious Disease Division at Baystate Medical Center. Flu activity normally peaks in the United States in January or February; however, seasonal flu activity can occur as late as May.

Everyone six months of age and older should get the flu vaccine.

For those who don’t like needles, Haessler says you won’t have to suffer through two vaccinations this year for the seasonal flu and H1N1 swine flu. The 2010/2011 flu vaccine will protect against three different flu viruses: an H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus, and the H1N1 virus that killed some 13,000 people last year and sickened more than 60 million adults and children in the United States.

And, if you really have a fear of needles, there is an alternative to the flu shot: a nasal-spray flu vaccine available for use

in healthy people ages 5 to 49 who are not pregnant. People with severe allergies to eggs should not get either form of the vaccine.

Haessler notes people should remember it takes one to two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop that will protect them against the influenza virus infection. Protection lasts about a year.

She dispelled the fallacy that you can get sick from the flu shot. “The flu shot is made from inactivated (dead) virus that cannot give you the flu. There are a lot of colds and viruses around at this time of year, and some people may catch them shortly afterwards and erroneously attribute their illness to the vaccine,” says Haessler.



INTRODUCING TWO NEW PRIMARY CARE SPECIALISTS

Dr. Deepu Thomas is a specialist in outpatient care of chronic medical conditions, preventive medicine, travel medicine, bursa and knee injections, and minor surgical procedures. He earned his medical degree from Medical College Hospital, Mahatma Gandhi University in India. He completed his residency in internal medicine at Saint Vincent Hospital in Massachusetts. Thomas is currently welcoming new patients in Greenfield at Baystate Medical Practices – Franklin Adult Medicine.

For more information or to make an appointment, please call 413-773-2022.

Dr. Ahmad Waseef is a specialist in internal medicine, diabetes, hypertension, and chronic kidney disease. He earned his medical degree at Chittagong Medical College in Bangladesh and completed his residency in internal medicine at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center in Brooklyn. He is currently welcoming new patients in East Longmeadow at Baystate Medical Practices – East Longmeadow Adult Medicine.

For more information or to make an appointment, please call 413-525-4555.

WATCH THIS!



Dr. Waseef discusses his patient care philosophy online at baystatehealth.org/bmpelam.



Dr. Deepu Thomas



Dr. Ahmad Waseef