



NEWS RELEASE

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Vaccine is still available

Warm weather does not keep flu bug away

HEIDELBERG, Germany – Lab results from Landstuhl and electronic surveillance of hospital visits show that the American military community in Europe is not immune from getting the flu.

“Landstuhl’s laboratory confirmed the first cases of influenza in January. We expect the numbers to grow through March,” said Maj. Scott Newberg, of the Force Health Protection Office. He added that, “Now is a good time to head to your local health clinic and get immunized against the flu.”

Newberg said the Army requires all Soldiers to receive the flu vaccine. In Europe, nearly all Soldiers have been vaccinated as of January 1. But not all Family members or retirees have taken advantage of the free vaccine.

“The more Family members and retirees who get the vaccine, the better our communities will be protected,” said Newberg. The flu virus isn’t easily transmitted within a community when the vaccine protects the majority of the population, he added.

Newberg said that it is a myth that the flu vaccine gives you the flu. What is true is vaccination will either prevent the disease or lessen the flu’s severity. Sometimes people avoid the flu vaccine because of a misunderstanding. Perhaps they tried the vaccine once and later became sick.

“It takes about two weeks for your body to develop antibodies from the vaccine; the antibodies protect you from the flu virus,” said Newberg.

During this two-week period, individuals may be exposed to one of many viruses or bacteria that circulate in the wintertime. Other bacteria and viruses may cause symptoms that people associate with their recent vaccination.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends vaccination for certain categories of people who are at a higher risk to suffer serious consequences if they were to catch the influenza virus.

“For instance,” Newberg explained, “children aged 6 months up to age 5 are at higher risk, as are adults 50 years and older. The CDC also recommends children 8 and under who have never had an influenza vaccine before should have 2 doses with a period of at least 4 weeks in between the first and second dose. This will improve their antibody response and help them fight off the virus.”

This year Army clinics offered the flu vaccine in a nasal spray in addition to the familiar shot in the arm vaccine. Both types of vaccine remain available in most clinics.

Newberg advises that in addition to the flu vaccine, there are other ways to stay healthy.

Stay healthy and protect yourself against flu and many other wintertime respiratory diseases by following simple precautions. These include:

- Washing your hands frequently.
- Not touching your mouth, nose, eyes.
- Covering your coughs with your hand or use the crook of your arm.
- Eating healthy.
- Exercising daily.
- Most importantly, do not smoke!

Protect yourself and your community this year - visit your local health clinic to get the flu vaccine.