

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Allina Health, through its Mercy & Unity Hospital Foundation and Penny George Institute for Health and HealingWellness Program, is partnering with your child’s school to offer students the seasonal influenza vaccine. This vaccine will protect against all four influenza strains that are expected to circulate this year.

If you approve having your child vaccinated, a completed and returned consent form is required in order for your student to receive the influenza vaccine:

1. **Read and Review:** the Vaccination Information Statement (VIS) included with this letter;
2. **Read and Review:** the Flu Facts & Myths form located on the back of this letter;
3. **Sign and Date:** the included consent form to accept vaccination for your child; and
4. **Return:** the consent form to the student’s health teacher

Students with signed and returned consent forms will be given the vaccination during their health class on **[DATE].**

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinic scheduled during your child’s health class, please call Dawn Prince, LPN, Wellness Program Supervisor and Event Coordinator, at the number below. We also encourage you to visit the CDC’s influenza web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu> or your health care provider who can answer your questions about the influenza virus.

Sincerely,



Dr. Courtney Baechler

Vice President, Allina Health

Medical Director, Penny George Institute for Health and Healing



Dawn Prince, LPN

Wellness Program Supervisor & Event Coordinator

763-236-3810

3. Some people may experience flu like symptoms despite getting vaccinated is that they may have been exposed to a flu virus that is very different from the viruses the vaccine is designed to protect against. The ability of a flu vaccine to protect a person depends largely on the similarity or “match” between the viruses selected to make the vaccine and those spreading and causing illness. There are many different flu viruses that spread and cause illness among people.

4. Unfortunately, the flu vaccine doesn’t always provide adequate protection against the flu. This is more likely to occur among people who have weakened immune systems or people age 65 and older.

## Myth: I don’t need to get the seasonal flu vaccine if I had it last year.

**Fact:** It’s important to remember that flu viruses are constantly changing (mutating) so viruses circulating one year may be slightly different the next. One of the four influenza vaccine strains in the 2016-2017 vaccine are different than last year and annual vaccination is recommended even for those who were vaccinated in 2015. This provides optimal protection against influenza.

## Myth: I’m healthy so I don’t need a flu vaccine.

**Fact:** Even if you’re healthy, it’s important that you get a flu vaccine each year to protect your friends, your family and yourself. There is evidence that many healthy people become infected and don’t get symptoms, but can still spread the virus.

Myth: I’m pregnant or think I may be pregnant so I should not get the flu shot.

**Fact:** Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza complications and are among the “high risk” persons that

CDC recommends should get vaccinated anytime during their pregnancy. Pregnant women should not get FluMist. A study of influenza vaccination examining 2,000 pregnant women demonstrated no adverse fetal effects associated with influenza vaccine. Getting the flu shot is your best protection against the flu!

## Myth: It’s inconvenient.

**Fact:** Allina Health is offering flu vaccination at local schools, churches, community groups and companies. Please watch for fliers that will indicate the date, time and location of the community clinics.

Source: CDC [www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm)

## Myth: The flu vaccine isn’t safe.

**Fact:** Over the last 50 years, seasonal flu vaccines have had very good safety track records. Hundreds of millions of Americans have received seasonal flu vaccines. The most common side effects following flu vaccinations are mild. This season’s flu vaccine is expected to have a similar safety profile. Please note that the flu vaccine should not be given to persons with a history of Guillain-barre that occurred after having the influenza vaccine or for anyone with a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine. It should not be given to children under 6 months of age.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) closely monitor for any signs that flu vaccines are causing unexpected adverse events.

## Myth: The flu vaccine can give me the flu.

**Fact:** Flu vaccines CANNOT cause the flu. The viruses in flu vaccines are either killed (the flu shot) or weakened (nasal spray vaccine). The vaccines work by priming your body’s defenses in case you’re exposed to an actual flu virus. If you’re exposed before getting the shot, or before the vaccine takes effect, you can get the flu, but it’s not from the vaccine. You may get a sore arm from the injection itself.

## Myth: The flu is just like a bad cold.

**Fact:** Influenza (flu) is far more dangerous than a bad cold. Flu is a serious disease of the nose, throat and lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. People age 65 years and older, pregnant women and young children are more likely to get complications from flu. The flu can make chronic health problems, such as asthma or congestive heart failure, worse. Each year, about 200,000 people in the U.S. are hospitalized and about 36,000 people die because of the flu. Most who die are 65 years and older. But children younger than 2 years old are as likely as those over 65 to be hospitalized because of flu complications.

## Myth: I can get the flu even if I get vaccinated.

**Fact:** There are a couple of likely reasons why someone might get a flu-like illness, even after he or she has been vaccinated against the flu:

1. Some people can become ill from other respiratory viruses besides flu, such as rhinoviruses, which are associated with the common cold, cause symptoms similar to flu, and also spread and cause illness during the flu season. The flu vaccine only protects against influenza viruses, not other viruses.

2. It’s possible to be exposed to influenza viruses, which cause the flu, shortly before getting vaccinated or during the two-week period after vaccination that it takes the body to develop immune protection. This exposure may result in a person becoming ill with flu before protection from the vaccine takes effect.

Seasonal influenza vaccine

myths & Facts

2016-2017