

Following is a sample article you can use for your employee newsletter or internal Web site to promote the importance of getting a flu shot. If you offer flu shots at the workplace, simply add your schedule or specific information.



## ‘Hit Me with Your Flu Shot’ and keep rockin’ through the flu season

This fall, tell your doctor to “hit me with your flu shot” and enjoy a rockin’ flu season without aches, chills, or lost personal time off.

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and in some cases, can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is to get a flu vaccination each fall.

Every year in the United States, approximately 5 to 20 percent of the population gets the flu, and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from complications. About 36,000 people in the United States die from the flu each year.

Common flu symptoms usually start suddenly and may include the following:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Fatigue (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose (though not as pronounced as with a cold)
- Body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

Getting a flu shot is the best way to keep from getting sick, but you also should practice these

steps to avoid the spread of other respiratory illnesses:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue away immediately after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol-based (60-95 percent) hand cleaner.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from other people.
- Avoid traveling to communities with a large amount of illness.
- If you get the flu, stay home from work, school and social gatherings.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Have nonprescription drugs and other health supplies on hand, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.

If you haven’t already, make a special effort to improve your family’s health habits. This includes eating healthy foods and getting plenty of exercise. Fruits

and vegetables contain antioxidants that can help boost the immune system and increase your ability to fight infection. Exercise also is proven to boost the immune system, so encourage your family to get at least 20 minutes of brisk exercise every day.

There has been an increasing amount of concern about the bird flu currently found in Asia and parts of Europe. This virus is not spread easily from person to person, but scientists are concerned that it could become highly contagious in the future. Currently, there is no vaccine for bird flu, and the vaccine for the seasonal flu will not protect against it. (*“It is hoped that a yearly seasonal flu vaccination might give some crossover immunity if a new influenza virus emerges. Because of this, the Arkansas Department of Health continues to offer yearly flu vaccination and continues to encourage all private physicians to vaccinate their patients.”* — Source: Arkansas’ Pandemic Plan, 11.4.2005.) However, staying healthy and protecting your body from other viruses is the best way to keep it strong.

