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October 4, 2024

All professionals in the EMS System for Metropolitan Oklahoma City and Tulsa

From: Jeffrey M. Goodloe, MD, NRP, FACEP, FAEMS  
Chief Medical Officer, Medical Control Board

Re: Influenza 2024-2025

Your health, the health of your families, and the health of our patients is always in prevailing importance to me. Preparing for this year's influenza season through influenza vaccinations is a smart way to reduce your risk of becoming ill with influenza and spreading it to others.

While you may have noticed pharmacies offering influenza vaccinations throughout most of September, this memo is purposefully held until early October this year to avoid "too early" influenza vaccinations. This factors the typical spike in influenza in Oklahoma being in the weeks of January and February. There is such a thing as getting vaccinated ahead of ideal timing and then when you really want the protective effect most, it is unfortunately waning. Thus, for our area of the United States, it is best to wait until at least the first half of October for vaccination against influenza.

This memo serves three purposes:

1. My reminder to you to take all the valuable information about personal protective equipment (PPE) that we have educated upon in our EMS system and to apply good infection control practices when caring for patients that have suspected influenza.
2. My request of you to get an influenza vaccination starting in early October and within the following 4-6 weeks. As I hope all of you genuinely believe, I will never ask of you what I am unwilling to do myself. I will be getting vaccinated against influenza in before the end of October and have voluntarily received an annual influenza vaccination for the last 29 years. For several years now, Hillcrest Medical Center in Tulsa, like a growing number of medical facilities, requires its health care professionals to receive a seasonal influenza vaccination to continue working (unless medically contraindicated due to personal allergies, etc.). Remember that when you voluntarily receive vaccination, you protect you, you protect your families, you protect your colleagues, and you protect your patients and your communities.

While I have no plans to require you to be immunized against influenza to remain credentialed as an EMS professional in our EMS system, I do pass along my strong encouragement for influenza vaccination.



3. My authorization for Protocol 17J: Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Administration to become effective today, October 4<sup>th</sup> for the 2024-25 flu season.

This year, as we did last year, have an additional topic to cover related to influenza vaccination: timing of these vaccinations in relation to COVID vaccination, specifically the newest COVID vaccinations that are suited to impart protection from severe COVID due to variants of present concern. In short, it is perfectly safe to get an influenza vaccination regardless of timing of COVID vaccination. In fact, you can get both vaccinations simultaneously.

No one will be surprised I still strongly encourage you to be vaccinated against COVID. And yes, I have now had a total of SIX COVID vaccinations – the initial set of two Pfizer doses, a Pfizer booster, a Moderna booster, a Pfizer bivalent booster, and most recently a Moderna booster. These COVID vaccinations are readily available at pharmacies, and I have consistently found it easy to book an appointment for vaccination using an online website, such as walgreens.com or CVS.com. It is fine to “mix and match” between Pfizer and Moderna branded mRNA vaccines. Some experts believe that mixing brands may even impart stronger immunity than sticking with the same brand for all COVID vaccinations. The worst reaction I have had to any of the booster vaccinations was a few hours of local arm ache and fatigue than faded within 12 hours.

Thank you as always for your efforts in service to others and for your ongoing dedication to excellence in the practice of EMS Medicine.