



## ETSU combats flu season with H1N1 vaccinations

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**By Nick Peppers**

The season for tissue boxes, bitter-tasting cough syrups, chicken noodle soup, and high fevers is here.

With the brunt of the flu season arriving within the next few months, ETSU has been preparing by sending out alerts and reminding students and the public to keep their health a priority this winter. In the alerts, the university is encouraging more than just washing your hands. In response, ETSU has obtained flu vaccinations to combat the sickness.

The emergence of the H1N1 strain of the virus, however, gives the public more to consider this time around. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that H1N1 is widespread among 43 states, including Tennessee. With more and more cases of the illness being reported and fatalities increasing, precautions are being exercised to reduce its spread. One of the primary suggestions by the CDC: Get vaccinated.

But should ETSU students take the time to go down to the clinic and take a shot in the arm? Kayla Hughes, an ETSU nursing student, thinks they should consider it.

"Many students live communally in dorms and are constantly in close quarters with one another," Hughes said. "This makes it increasingly easier for the sickness to spread and keep spreading."

Hughes added that even though she is not living in dorms, she has been advised to take the vaccination by her nursing instructors. The reason for this is to the consideration of her patients.

"When I go to the hospitals to do my clinical sessions, I expose my patients to any germs I might be carrying," she said. "Without the vaccination, I'm putting my patients at risk to catch the illness."

In October, the CDC released a list of priority recipients of the H1N1 vaccinations as the supplies became available. Among those listed were health care and emergency medical personnel like Hughes. Also listed, though, were those from the ages of 6 months to 24 years old. The majority of college students fall within this age range.

Elizabeth Virost, the Clinical Services Director at ETSU, also believes students should consider getting the vaccine. Virost offers that the stress that students –and anyone in general– can encounter should be taken into account.

"Stress lowers your immune system," Virost said. "That's when you're going to get sick, when you have the most to do, when you're the most stressed."

Virost further suggested other ways to prevent the spread of the illness.

"Exercise, sleep regular hours, eat a balance diet, and keep your immune system up," she said. "That's what you should do all the time."

With most sources in agreement about receiving the vaccination, something that could prevent someone from taking the shot is the potential negative side effects.

"There is an element of risk, yes, but there's an element of risk to crossing the street," she said. "Genetics are different, people are different, and environment is different, so you can't control all of that, but the majority of the people do just fine."

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In its information statement, the CDC addresses the mild problems that can occur with the vaccination. These include soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot was given; fainting (mainly adolescents); headache; muscle aches; fever and nausea. These problems can last up to two days after the shot.

The CDC also mentions some severe problems associated with the shot: "Life-threatening allergic reactions to vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot."

Other severe problems that can occur are associated with Guillain-Barré Syndrome, which is an autoimmune disorder that affects the peripheral nervous system. This problem, however, was associated with a past type of the vaccine in 1976 and not with any vaccines since then.

ETSU obtained the H1N1 vaccinations this fall. The free clinics for these vaccinations are open to all ETSU students, faculty, and staff, but supplies are limited at each session. The next clinic is scheduled for Dec. 10 in the Culp Center Atrium from 9 – 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 – 4 p.m.