

'Tis the Season

While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, influenza activity most often peaks in January or later. The annual seasonal flu vaccine supply is plentiful and is available at the Eisenhower Express Clinics in Rancho Mirage, La Quinta, Indian Wells and Cathedral City, beginning October 1 during regular business hours, and at flu clinics on Saturdays, October 3 through November 21, from 8 a.m. to noon at Rancho Mirage, Cathedral City and La Quinta.

Seasonal flu vaccines are extremely important, even though the vaccine does not cover the swine flu. The seasonal flu vaccine is particularly recommended for all individuals over the age of 65, as well as other high risk groups, including health care workers and those with other health conditions. Each vaccine contains three influenza viruses — two A viruses and one B virus. The viruses in the flu vaccine change every year based on international surveillance and scientific estimations about which types and strains of viruses will circulate that year. About two weeks after vaccination, the antibodies that protect against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

Again, the annual seasonal flu vaccine does not protect a person from the swine flu. The World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control, as well as the United States government are coordinating efforts to distribute the swine flu vaccine in middle to late October. First on the priority list for the swine flu vaccine will be pregnant women, followed by those who care for very small children, health care workers, and children from six months to 24 years of age. Those over the age of 65 are the last group prioritized for the swine flu vaccine because they are showing the greatest resistance to the virus.