



HEALTH MATTERS



A MONTHLY REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THE CITY OF CARMEL EMPLOYEE HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN

July 31 Balance	\$1,193,369		Dec 31, 2010 Balance	\$642,220
Total Revenues	\$820,518		Jan - Aug Revenues	\$7,101,932
Employer Premiums	676,423		Jan - Aug Expenses	\$6,820,939
Employee Premiums	131,333		August 30, 2011 Balance	\$923,213
Other Revenues	12,762			
Total Expenses	\$1,090,674		YTD Gain/(Loss)	\$280,993
Week 1 Claims	181,918			
Week 2 Claims	110,523			
Week 3 Claims	173,684			
Week 4 Claims	147,323			
Week 5 Claims	206,679			
Rx Claims	182,706			
Fixed Costs—Premiums	68,930			
Fixed Costs--Fees	18,911			
Monthly Gain/(Loss)	(\$270,156)			
August 30 Balance	\$923,213			

Once again this year, Carmel St. Vincent Hospital, with assistance from the Carmel Fire Department, will offer seasonal flu shots to all City employees and their spouses. These vaccines will be administered in the conference room at the main fire station on Civic Square from 9 AM to 3 PM on October 26th, 27th and 28th. You do not need to bring your City ID to receive a vaccine.

If you choose to participate, please take a moment to thank hospital personnel, as these vaccines are provided free of charge to the City and its employees. Also, a big THANK YOU to EMS Chief Mark Hulett for making the arrangements with Carmel St. Vincent.

Note: If you think you don't want or need a flu shot, please read the following article from WebMD. You'll be doing yourself, your family and friends and your co-workers a big favor.

Top 12 Flu Myths

WebMD (www.webmd.com) By [R. Morgan Griffin](#), Reviewed by [Louise Chang, MD](#), edited for space

Myths about the flu are everywhere. According to many experts, misconceptions and rumors about the flu are as hard to contain and as hard to fight as the virus itself. Unfortunately, flu myths are common even among the people who should know better, like health care workers. Given that influenza can be serious and even fatal, it's crucial that we all know what's fact and what's fable. So as a public service, and with the help of some flu experts from around the country, WebMD helps you debunk the top 12 flu myths.

Flu Myth #1: The seasonal flu is annoying but harmless.

"A lot of people just think of the flu as a very bad cold," says Curtis Allen, a spokesman for the CDC in Atlanta. But it's much worse than that. For one, you usually feel *terrible*. In addition to the congestion and cough, you're apt to have nasty body aches and fever, which are less likely with a garden-variety cold.

Aside from the short-term misery and lost workdays, flu can have more serious implications. Sure, most people who get the seasonal flu recover just fine. But the seasonal flu also hospitalizes 200,000 people in the U.S. each year. In some years it kills close to the number of women who die from breast cancer each year, and more than twice the number of people who die from AIDS.

Flu Myth #2: The flu vaccine can give you the flu.

This is the flu myth most likely to drive experts bonkers. "There is simply no way that the flu vaccine can give you the flu," says Christine Hay, MD, assistant professor at the University of Rochester Medical Center. "It's impossible." Why? Injected flu vaccines only contain dead virus, and a dead virus is, well, dead: it can't infect you. There is one type of live virus flu vaccine, the nasal vaccine, FluMist. But in this case, the virus is specially engineered to remove the parts of the virus that make people sick.

Despite the scientific impossibility of getting the flu from the flu vaccines, this widespread flu myth won't die. Experts suspect two reasons for its persistence. One, people mistake the side effects of the vaccine for flu. While side effects to the vaccine these days tend to be a sore arm, in the past, side effects often felt like mild symptoms of the flu. Two, flu season coincides with a time of year when bugs causing colds and other respiratory illnesses are in the air. Many people get the vaccine and then, within a few days, get sick with an unrelated cold virus. However, they blame the innocent flu vaccine, rather than their co-worker with a runny nose and cough.

Flu Myth #3: There is no treatment for the flu.

Two antiviral drugs are highly effective against the flu: Tamiflu, in pill form, and Relenza, which is inhaled. These drugs are most effective if taken within 48 hours of your first flu symptoms. But the drugs are beneficial even if taken 48 hours after symptom onset. Neither Tamiflu nor Relenza cures the flu. But they can reduce the amount of time you're sick by one or two days and make you less contagious to others.

Flu Myth #4: Antibiotics can fight the flu.

Antibiotics only fight bacterial infections. Flu is not caused by bacteria, but by a virus. So antibiotics have *absolutely no effect* on any kind of flu. But this message just won't sink in for some people. "We still have oodles of patients coming into the doctors, or bringing their children to the doctors, who want antibiotics for influenza," says William Schaffner, MD, chairman of the department of preventive medicine at Vanderbilt University's School of Medicine in Nashville.

However, there are instances of flu complications that involve bacterial infection. The flu virus can weaken your body and allow bacterial invaders to infect you. Secondary bacterial infections to the flu include bronchitis, ear infections, sinusitis, and most often, pneumonia. If your flu symptoms are getting better and then suddenly get worse, call your doctor. This may be a sign of a bacterial co-infection.

Flu Myth #5: The flu is only dangerous for the elderly.

It's true that the people most likely to become seriously ill or die from the seasonal flu are over age 65. But flu can be risky for anyone, even healthy young adults. Some of the most susceptible people to seasonal influenza are young children. "Children under 2 years have some of the highest rates of hospitalization from [seasonal] flu," says Hay. Children under 6 months are at the most risk from the seasonal flu because they're too young to get the vaccine. To protect infants from the flu, keep babies away from people who have the flu. Parents and caretakers of infants should get vaccinated.

Flu Myth #6: "Stomach flu" is a form of influenza.

The word "flu" is so overused that it's lost much of its actual meaning. Gastrointestinal viruses are called the "stomach flu," but they have no connection to the actual influenza virus. If you suffer vomiting and diarrhea, but no fever or body ache, you probably do not have the flu.

Keep in mind: in children, the influenza virus *can* sometimes cause vomiting and diarrhea. But when it comes to typical seasonal flu, vomiting and diarrhea are rare in adults, says Trish M. Perl, MD, assistant professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore.

Flu Myth #7: If you get the flu, you can't get it again during that flu season.

Many people assume that if they've had the flu recently, they can't get it again—and thus don't need to get the vaccine, Perl says. That's not the case because flu infection can happen from more than one strain of virus. "In any flu season, there's usually both Type A and Type B influenza in circulation," Perl tells WebMD. Both can cause the flu. It's quite possible that you could get infected with one type and then the other. So if you've already had the flu, you should still get the vaccine. "Otherwise, you could be sick and unhappy twice," Perl says.

Flu Myth #8: If you're young and healthy, you don't need to worry about getting the vaccine.

We should all get the seasonal flu vaccine. Sure, if you're in good health, you'll probably recover from the seasonal flu just fine. But why suffer through the flu if you can avoid it? Second, protecting yourself isn't the only reason to get vaccinated.

"Healthy adults forget that while they themselves might be at low risk for getting serious flu complications, other people in their family might not," says Hay. If you have a small child at home, or an older parent, your failure to get yourself vaccinated could endanger them. And that's true on a larger, societal level. People with the weakest defenses, like children under 6 months, can't get the flu vaccine. Their safety depends on the rest of us getting immunized.

Flu Myth #9: You can skip years between flu vaccinations.

Experts say that some of us don't understand that we need a new seasonal flu vaccine every year. "It's confusing, since the flu vaccine is different from most vaccines, which offer longer-lasting protection," says Schaffner. "With the measles vaccine, you get two injections and then you don't have to worry about it for the rest of your life." The flu vaccine isn't like that. Why? The particular strains of flu that are dominant change every single year. So every single year, researchers have to develop a brand new vaccine.

Flu Myth #10: Vaccines are dangerous.

In recent years, there's been growing mistrust of vaccines, including the flu vaccine. Some believe that there could be a link between vaccines—specifically the ingredient thimerosal—and

developmental disorders in children, like autism. However, there is no evidence that vaccines cause autism, and experts say that we're losing sight of how important vaccines are. "Vaccines are, arguably, the greatest medical advance in history," says Perl. They've prevented more illness and death than any treatment.

If you're still concerned, you should know that there are thimerosal-free flu vaccines available. In fact, every year, manufacturers produce more of this vaccine than people use. If you want your child to get it, just ask your doctor.

Flu Myth #11: Cold weather causes the flu.

No matter what your grandmother may have said, going outside without a hat in the winter does not increase your risk of flu. While there might seem to be a connection—since flu season coincides with colder months in the U.S.—there isn't. After all, flu season is the same throughout the whole country: even if it's frigid in Minnesota, it's still warm in Florida. The rise and fall of flu season each year has more to do with the natural cycle of the virus, although experts aren't exactly sure how it works. Colder weather might increase the risk of flu in one way: We might come into closer contact with other people because we're all stuck inside. That could make it easier for the virus to spread.

Flu Myth #12: If you haven't gotten the seasonal flu vaccine by November, there's no point.

While supplies of vaccine used to run out by November, that's not the case anymore, says Allen. There should be enough vaccine for anyone who wants it, and you should be able to get it as late as December or January. Besides, the flu often doesn't hit its peak until February or sometimes as late as March.

So get your flu shot from the City in October, or later on from another provider if you choose. You could spare yourself—and your family and co-workers—a lot of misery.

Eat This (2010 Edition, by David Zinczenko) Not That!

At home:

DiGiorno Crispy Flatbread Tuscan Style Chicken Pizza 1/2 pizza = 420 calories 21 g fat (9 g saturated), 1020 mg sodium

DiGiorno for One Four Cheese Pizza 1 pizza = 720 calories 30 g fat (12 g saturated), 1190 mg sodium

DiGiorno's Crispy Flatbread line is its healthiest by far.

Eating out:

Auntie Anne's Cinnamon Sugar Pretzel 380 calories (without butter) 1 g fat (0 g saturated), 29 g sugars

Cinnabon Classic Cinnamon Roll 730 calories 24 g fat (8 g saturated), 49 g sugars

Don't use a trip to the mall as an excuse to indulge in a fat and sugar binge.