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MONOGRAM

A Message from Tom Boo, MD, Mono County Public Health Officer

Stay Healthy: Protect Yourself and Your Family From the Flu

Flu cases have been rising quickly across the country and locally in recent weeks. This year's flu season is being called "moderately severe," with over 11 million people already getting sick, and 5,000 deaths. Two or three of my older patients in Bishop have been hospitalized with influenza so far this year. Fortunately, none have died.

The best way to stay safe is to get a flu shot. It is not too late – flu season will last until spring.

Why should I get the flu shot now?

- **It keeps you out of the hospital.** This season, the flu has already hospitalized about 120,000 people. The vaccine is your best defense against getting a severe case that requires medical emergency care.
- **It makes the illness less severe.** Even if you still get the flu after your shot, being vaccinated helps make your symptoms much milder and the illness shorter.
- **It protects the people you love.** When you get vaccinated, you are less likely to spread the virus to babies, grandparents, and people with health conditions who can get very sick from the flu.
- **Flu shots protect kids.** Last year flu killed almost 300 U.S. children, mostly healthy kids. This year's flu shot appears particularly good at preventing severe disease in children.

Is the flu shot safe?

Yes. The flu shot cannot give you the flu. It is made with "killed" or weakened viruses that teach your body how to fight the real thing. A sore arm is common, and some people might get a little fever, but that is just a sign that your body is building its protection.

Where can I get one?

Flu shots are available at local pharmacies, doctor's offices, and the Mono County Health Department (Monday-Thursday; call (760) 924-1830). For many people they are free, completely covered by insurance.

Take a moment to protect your health today.