



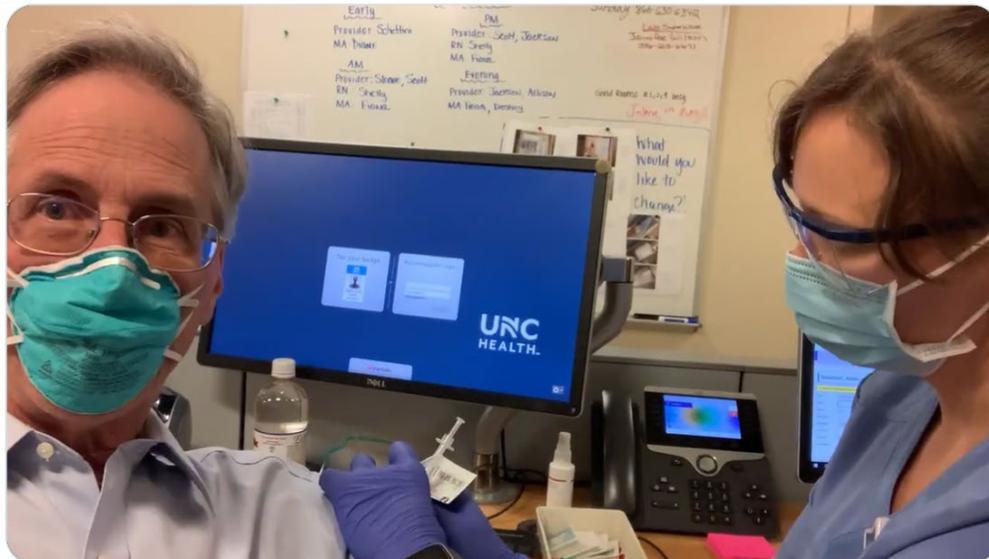
UNC Family Medicine Patient Newsletter

February 2022

COVID-19 regulations are changing. How do I keep myself safe?

A message from Dr. Adam Goldstein

We are all thrilled to see COVID-19 infection rates continuing to decline and vaccination rates that continue to increase. Over 95% of adults over the age of 65 have received 1 or 2 vaccination doses, and 70% of our elderly have received a booster dose. Overall vaccination rates among younger adults can still dramatically improve, including booster shots for those who have not received one. One thing that is clear though throughout the last year is that those who are fully vaccinated rarely get seriously ill from a COVID infection. Conversely, those who are unvaccinated who catch COVID are significantly more often sicker, hospitalized and dying.



Goldstein gladly getting his booster shot

As we move out into more public activities, we know that continuing to wear masks and washing hands will still protect ourselves and our loved ones from infections, as they have done repeatedly throughout the pandemic. Choosing to protect yourself remains a common-sense strategy that many individuals and business will continue to promote, particularly until we know that additional waves of the virus will not occur. With vaccines, regular booster shots, and new medications more widely available, we hope that this disease will become one that we can manage to live with, with less fear and more understanding of what each of us can do to limit new infections among those we love.

Dr. Goldstein (who many of you know) is Medical Director of the [Town of Chapel Hill's Wellness at Work](#) program, as well as Director of the UNC [Tobacco Treatment](#) and [Weight Management Programs](#).

Let's Talk Health with Drs. Dana Neutze and Niketa Williams



Dr. Neutze

Dr. Williams

Blood Pressure

Nearly 1 in every 2 adults (47.3%) in the United States has high blood pressure. High blood pressure, or hypertension, happens when your blood pressure stays higher than a normal level for a long period of time. This puts a continued strain on the heart which can cause heart attacks, strokes, and other serious medical conditions.

Only 24% of adults with hypertension have their blood pressure under control. For this reason, hypertension is sometimes called the “silent killer,” because it often does not present with any signs or symptoms, so people may go many years without realizing they have it. The good news is that high blood pressure can be checked easily, and there are many activities, lifestyle modifications, and medications that can help treat it.

Know Your Number

The first step to controlling your blood pressure, though, is knowing if you have high blood pressure! Unfortunately, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, many people have not been seen regularly in the FMC for routine health care and maintenance. It is still very important to have blood pressure checked by a health professional and to have regular lab bloodwork completed. Contact us in [My UNC Chart](#) or call 984-974-0210 to get you scheduled to see your provider.

Sources: [CDC.gov](#)

CONTROLLING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



People with high blood pressure can work with their doctors to figure out if medications are right to treat it. There are lifestyle changes people can make at home to control their high blood pressure:

- A diet low in salt, fat, and cholesterol, and high in fresh fruits and vegetables
- Be active!
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Get adequate sleep
- Avoid tobacco use and quit smoking if you are a smoker



ASK YOUR DOCTOR - GET CHECKED!

If you do not have hypertension, these are also good strategies to help avoid having high blood pressure in the future!

UNC Tobacco Treatment Program

February, being American Heart Month, is a great reminder of how becoming tobacco-free is on one of the best things you can do for your heart and overall health. The [American Heart Association estimates](#) that 800,000 deaths in the United States are due to cardiovascular disease and that 1/3 of these deaths are from smoking and secondhand smoke. Cardiovascular disease includes a variety of conditions that affect the heart and/or blood vessels such as a heart attack, high blood pressure (hypertension), coronary heart disease, stroke, aneurysm, and peripheral artery disease (narrowing or blockage of the vessels that carry blood from the heart to the legs).

Benefits of quitting smoking

It is never too late to quit smoking and some positive benefits can be made even within the first day of quitting.

20
minutes

Blood pressure and heart rate can begin to decrease.

12
hours

The carbon monoxide levels in your blood can return to normal.

2
weeks

Your circulation and lung function begin to improve.

1
year

Your risk of coronary heart disease is reduced by 50 percent.

5
years

Your risk stroke returns to normal.

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Some things that can increase your chances of becoming and staying tobacco-free are: Getting support (such as through tobacco treatment counseling), using FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications if appropriate, setting a quit date and preparing for your quit. Remember, you don't have to do it alone, there are programs available to support you throughout the process of becoming tobacco-free.

If you or someone you know is interested in starting the journey to becoming tobacco-free and would like to learn more about UNC's Tobacco Treatment Program please check us out [HERE](#) or by calling: 984-974-4971 for more information.

References:

[Heart.org](https://www.heart.org)

[FDA.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

[Cancer.gov](https://www.cancer.gov)

Reminder: New insurance cards issued for some people in 2022 – make sure to check and update your insurance information!

It is a new year - time to update your insurance information. Check your insurance card to make sure you have the one issued for 2022. Popular insurance plans that have big changes in their ID number as of January 1st include the Blue Cross Blue Shield State Health Plan. Last year's card ID information is now expired in the system. You can make your visit faster by ensuring your new ID number is entered into your account before the day of your appointment. Update your card on [My UNC Chart](#) or contact us in advance of your visit – any scheduler can enter the information. Make sure you have the right card when you make your appointment!

Don't forget to get your flu shot!

It's still flu season! We recommend flu vaccines for everyone over 6 months old and recommend COVID-19 vaccination for all individuals over the age of 5. Even if you don't get your flu shot from us, there are plenty of other options including pharmacies and certain grocery stores. If you do receive your flu vaccine elsewhere, please let us know in [My UNC Chart!](#)

Please remember the 3 W's as we battle both COVID-19 and the flu virus this winter:

Wear your mask

Wash your hands frequently

Wait 6 feet away from others

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