



# UNC Family Medicine Patient Newsletter

September 2021

## COVID Vaccinations Free at FMC

As you may have heard, UNC is now requiring all healthcare employees to be vaccinated to protect you and your loved ones – we hope you'll join us! The vaccines are safe and do work well against both getting COVID-19 and keeping you out of the hospital or worse. From Dr. Matt Zeitler:



*As a physician who practices at the Family Medicine Center, UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill, Hillsborough Hospital, and Chatham Hospital, I have seen first-hand the devastating impacts the COVID-19 resurgence is having. Because of new and rapidly rising cases, we have a critical shortage of hospital beds across the state. **I have noticed a significant number of unvaccinated people being hospitalized and this is definitely contributing to hospital capacity. Even more scary is the number of children and young people being affected in the last several weeks; our Children's Hospital is full.** As a father of an 18-month-old son, Griffin, I can't help but feel helpless and scared. My spouse and I are vaccinated, but Griffin can't be. As children in our communities return to daycares, schools, and public venues, we must help protect them by ensuring every adolescent and adult in our community gets vaccinated. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, I strongly encourage you to get vaccinated, not only for your own personal health, but also to protect your family, your neighbors, your community, and those that can't get vaccinated, our kids. Let's all work together to protect and care for one another and for our future!*

If you are an established patient with UNC Family Practice and age 12 and up, you can get a **free COVID-19 vaccine** here Monday through Friday 8:30am to 3:30pm. **Appointments are required – contact us in [My UNC Chart](#)** or call 984-974-0210 to schedule an appointment.

If you missed the COVID Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions newsletter, read more about some of the FAQ's many people have regarding vaccines [HERE](#).

**Regardless of your vaccination status, our advice is to wear a mask to protect yourself and others!**

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



Dr. Neutze

Dr. Williams

### Topic #1: Flu and Covid-19 Vaccines

Getting the flu shot is more important now than ever. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, and new variants that make it easier to catch Covid-19 – such as the Delta variant – become more widespread, getting a flu shot can help keep you out of the hospital, which is overburdened with unvaccinated COVID-19 patients. The flu, like Covid-19, is a highly-contagious virus that is spread by inhaling respiratory droplets in the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. By getting vaccinated for flu, you can protect yourself in two ways: First, the flu vaccine helps reduce the chance of becoming infected by this life-threatening virus. Second, if a vaccinated person *does* contract the flu, the risk of hospitalization and/or death is greatly reduced, as compared to people who have not been vaccinated.

**You can get your flu shot and your COVID-19 vaccine on the same day.** We recommend flu vaccines for everyone over 6 months old, and recommend Covid-19 vaccination for all individuals over the age of 12. Getting your flu and Covid-19 shots at the FMC is quick and easy! If you are already planning to see us for an appointment, we can give you your flu and/or COVID-19 shot at the same time. We are also offering walk-in flu shot hours throughout the fall. Patients who attend walk-in hours may also bring their family members for flu shots! 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 fall:

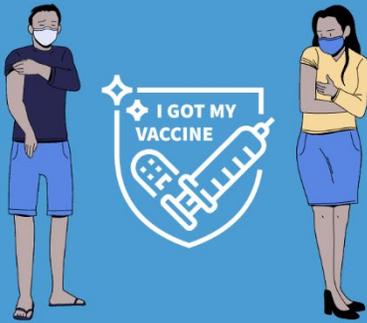
Wear your mask

Wash your hands frequently

Wait 6 feet away from others

# FLU VS COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

*COVID-19 and flu symptoms are oftentimes the same, so you should consult with your doctor immediately if you start to experience any of these:*



## **Both COVID-19 and flu:**

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- Vomiting and diarrhea (in children more than adults)

## **COVID-19:**

- Possible change in or loss of taste or smell

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STARTING SEPTEMBER 25!

## **SATURDAY FLU SHOT CLINIC**

- September 25
- October 2
- October 9
- October 16
- October 23
- October 30

**WALK-INS WELCOME!**

\*For established Family Medicine patients and families only\*

Blood pressure is how forcefully the heart has to push (pump) blood through the blood vessels to reach the rest of the body. High blood pressure – called hypertension – can be very dangerous. Over time, uncontrolled hypertension can cause heart attacks, strokes, and other serious medical conditions. Especially in the early stages of the disease, many people do not know that their blood pressure is high, because there are few if any signs and symptoms. Other people may experience headaches, blurry vision, dizziness, frequent nose bleeds, or shortness of breath, but these symptoms are not caused by hypertension only, and if high blood pressure *is* causing these symptoms, it may be a sign that the blood pressure is now dangerously high. 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.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, many people have not been seen regularly in the FMC for routine health care and maintenance. It is very important to have blood pressure checked by a health professional and to have regular lab bloodwork completed. Even if you are monitoring your blood pressure at home, checking labs is necessary for you and your providers to know and understand possible health risks. Call us or reach out in [My UNC Chart](#) about getting you scheduled for these very important tests!

### Faculty Research Feature: Vinay Reddy, MD, MPH



Dr. Reddy is an Assistant Professor and works at our Carraway Village clinic in north Chapel Hill. He is a lead informatics physician at UNC Health and serves as a medical student advisor in the School of Medicine. He does a great bit of research about blood pressure, and was kind enough to give us insight into a recent study he engaged in. From Dr. Reddy:

As a primary care physician, we treat many chronic illnesses. One of the most difficult ones to manage and control is high blood pressure.

Nearly half of American adults have high blood pressure. High blood pressure can lead to heart attacks, stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, vision loss, and sexual dysfunction.

The best way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked at your health care provider's office. This should be done yearly if you are 40 years or older or over 18 at increased risk (overweight or previous high-normal reading) of high blood pressure. Healthy adults 18-39 years old should be screened every 3-5 years.

The gold standard to diagnose high blood pressure is to have your provider refer you for a 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure assessment. This device will collect 35-40 readings while you are awake and asleep and provide a much more accurate picture of your blood pressure averages.

Why is high blood pressure difficult to control?

1. It is one of the few chronic diseases in which most people don't feel significant symptoms when it is elevated, which is why it is often called the silent killer.
2. Patients and providers tend to rationalize elevated blood pressures as random or isolated and fail to evaluate it further, sometimes missing the diagnosis. Even when it is high blood pressure diagnosed, the patient and/or provider fail to act immediately because they do not believe the readings and will wait until the next visit. This is called "clinical inertia."

To lessen "clinical inertia," we developed a plan of action to measure blood pressure more accurately both in the patient's home and in the provider's office. At home we tested the use of blood pressure measurement devices that would send each reading to the patient's provider directly through the electronic medical record system, so that medications could be prescribed and increased appropriately and aggressively without delay. In the clinic, we started taking multiple blood pressure measurements and averaging the blood pressure numbers which provides a more accurate reading of the patients' blood pressure. If providers are more likely to believe the readings and see that they are elevated, they are more likely to act upon them. We also developed a process to help providers simplify medication prescriptions used for treating high blood pressure. The early results showed there is clinically significant improvement in controlling high blood pressure and reaching our target blood pressure goals, numbers which provide a more accurate reading of the patients' blood pressure.

## Updates from the FMC

### New Clinic Schedule

In case you missed it, the Family Medicine Clinic and Urgent Care hours were updated beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup>:

#### Family Medicine Clinic

Monday: 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM  
Tuesday: 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM  
Wednesday: 9:30 AM – 7:00 PM  
Thursday: 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM  
Friday: 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM  
Saturday: 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

#### Urgent Care

Monday-Friday: 7:00 AM- 9:00 PM  
Saturday-Sunday: 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM

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