



UTMB Health Center for Polar Medical Operations
Levin Hall, 5th Floor, Suite 5.527, Route 1004
301 University Blvd.
Galveston, TX 77555-1004
Phone 855.300.9704
Fax 409.772.3600

Influenza Immunization

Dear USAP Participant:

Please READ!

Every deploying USAP participant is required to receive an influenza vaccination prior to deployment. Participants should obtain a flu shot from their medical provider at least two weeks prior to deployment and submit the supporting documentation to ASC Medical. In the event that participants were unable to obtain a flu vaccine, one will be administered in Christchurch prior to departing for Antarctica, or upon arrival at Palmer Station.

Receiving the vaccination is a condition of your deployment. Exemptions based on medical reasons will be considered on an individual basis.

To learn more about the flu vaccine, contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO) or Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/flu

Influenza Vaccination - Important Notice

Effective 14 July 2008, every deploying USAP participant is required to receive an influenza vaccination prior to deployment. The National Science Foundation concluded that influenza resulted in a significant impact to 2007-2008 operations and therefore, going forward, all deploying personnel must receive a flu shot.

Obtaining Flu Shots:

1.) Participants should obtain a flu shot from their medical provider during the PQ process and submit the supporting documentation to ASC Medical. Please note it is recommended that you receive the flu shot at least two weeks prior to deployment to maximize its protective benefits.

OR

2.) Participants will be given flu shots in Christchurch prior to leaving for Antarctica, or upon arrival at Palmer Station.

Below you will find Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the Influenza Vaccination program. Once you have reviewed all of the information, please contact your hiring manager or the Human Resources department for questions relating to your employment. For medical-based inquiries, please contact the Medical department at 1-855-300-9704.

FAQs

Q: Why do we have to take the flu shot to go to Antarctica?

A: A panel of medical consultants to the National Science Foundation recently reviewed health care in Antarctica. The report included the summary of two outbreaks of influenza at McMurdo during the 2007-2008 summer season. There was a very significant impact on productivity and health care costs. The medical experts recommended that the vaccine should be given in order to prevent the likelihood of similar outbreaks in the future. The NSF accepted the recommendation and issued a directive making the immunizations mandatory. Success of this initiative was recognized throughout the 2008-2009 summer season with only two positive flu tests.

Q: Will having the shot prevent me from getting the flu?

A: Not always. The vaccine is made up of multiple strains of influenza virus. There are many strains of “flu” viruses. Reports from all over the world are studied each year to predict the strains most likely to cause flu epidemics across different regions. The vaccine is 90% effective in protecting healthy young adults from illness when the vaccine strain is similar to the infecting strain. It is important for everyone to keep their immune systems healthy through regular exercise and good nutrition because the vaccine is less effective in preventing illness in older people and those that have diseases that reduce immunity. The “PQ” examinations are intended to prevent deployment of unhealthy people.

Q: How will I get the shot?

A: Ideally, you would get the shot from your personal physician as part of the “PQ” exam. However, the vaccine may not be available in the United States until late September, after many are on their way to Antarctica. The vaccine will also be given at Christchurch or Palmer Station in these circumstances. As for winter-over employees, theirs will be available in McMurdo. Note: There is a one-two week period after getting the shot before full protection has developed, so the earlier in the deployment cycle it can be given, the better for you and your contacts.

Q: What if I’m allergic? Will I have a localized reaction?

A: If you have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past (severe reaction is throat, mouth or airway swelling, difficulty breathing, rash or hives), then submit documentation from the treating physician or emergency room. If you have a proven severe reaction to egg protein (same symptoms as above), then submit the report from your physician or allergist. People with previous severe reactions to the shot or to egg protein should not receive the shot. With proper documentation, you will be excused from the requirement. Localized reactions associated with

the flu shot may include mild problems such as soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given. They are generally not serious and do not justify exemption from the annual requirement for receiving the immunization.

Q: How can I learn more about the shots?

A: To learn more about the flu vaccine, related benefits, risks, and precautions contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

-Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)

-Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/flu