**Flu season ahead……..**

As we prepare to share our country with the rest of the world, we can expect to see more seasonal flu in New Zealand. Vaccinating more people from the flu will save lives and preserve capacity in our hospitals.

The flu vaccine can be safely administered at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccine- whether that be a booster shot or child vaccine.

Currently flu vaccinations are free for pregnant women, over 65s, Maori & Pacific people who are 55-64 yrs of age, and people who have certain medical conditions including those with cancer and diabetes.

**Isn’t the Flu just a bad cold?**

No. A cold virus only affects the nose, throat and upper chest and lasts for a few days, whereas influenza, commonly called the Flu can be a serious illness that affects the whole body and can last a week or more.

Infection with the Flu virus can lead to a stay in hospital for any age group but particularly if you are elderly or have an ongoing medical condition. Flu can make an existing medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes, a lot worse.

Even if you don’t end up in hospital, Flu can keep you in bed for a week or more, preventing you from going to work, playing sport or just about anything else that requires leaving the house.

**I’m healthy and I had one last year, do I really need it?**

Every year the flu virus changes. Scientists find the three or four types of flu that will be the most widespread and dangerous for the coming winter, and use them to develop the Flu vaccine for that year.

Being fit and healthy will not protect you from influenza. The flu spreads easily and even if you’re super healthy, your family, friends and co-workers may not be. By immunizing against influenza you can protect yourself and lessen the chance of bringing it home to a baby, older relatives or someone with a medical condition who could develop serious complications from influenza.

**Can the flu shot give me the flu?**

No. You cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

The flu vaccine is not made from a live flu virus, therefore, you can’t catch the flu from it. When you get the vaccine, your body learns what this flu strain looks like, so it can fight the illness if you should get it. It takes about 2 weeks from getting the vaccine for your body to be fully ready.

**When should I get the flu shot?**

They are expecting to have Flu vaccines available from 1st April. Give your Medical Centre a call in the very near future.