

NEWS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

HALIFAX REGIONAL TACKLES HEALTH ISSUE

Medical Center Requires Employees to Have Flu Shots

ROANOKE RAPIDS, NC (August 15, 2011)--Halifax Regional has taken a leadership role in a major public health issue by requiring employees to have a flu shot this season.

The Board of Directors and the Medical Staff have joined Will Mahone, president of the Medical Center, in agreeing to a new policy that requires employees to be immunized for the flu.

“The Board of Directors supports the new policy,” said Vernon Bryant, Chair. “In addition, board members have committed to take the flu shot when the vaccine becomes available this fall.”

“The Medical Staff has discussed this issue and endorses the policy,” said Gerardo Maradiaga, M.D., chief of the medical staff. “We recommend shots as the best way to protect patients, employees and our community from the flu.”

The policy applies to the approximately 1,000 full and part time employees, said Mahone. Flu shots will be provided to employees at no cost in October and November.

“Reaction from employees has been positive,” Mahone said. “They know it is the right thing to do for our patients and to demonstrate leadership in the community.”

Halifax Regional becomes the 11th hospital in North Carolina to require employees to have flu shots, according to the North Carolina Hospital Association.

“Healthcare workers are especially vulnerable to both getting sick with influenza and spreading it to patients,” said Don Dalton, spokesman for the Hospital Association. “We believe such a policy that Halifax Regional has adopted is in the best interests of patients and employees.”

Hospital employees are dedicated to caring for patients and often continue to work even when they do not feel well, noted Mahone. “If they have received the flu vaccine, they won’t need to worry about infecting patients with the flu virus.”

The virus may be passed from one person to another even before any symptoms exist, says Mahone. “We hope our policy sends a message to the community of the importance of providing a safe environment for patients.

“It’s an added layer of protection for everyone when you realize that many patients, including children and the elderly, are especially vulnerable to the flu virus,” he added.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone six months of age and older get the flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available in their community. While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or later.

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About Halifax Regional-

Halifax Regional Medical Center is licensed for 204 beds, including psychiatric and nursery. A non-profit organization, Halifax Regional is fully accredited by the Joint Commission. For more information, visit www.halifaxregional.org.