

# Health Services suggests ways to fight against the flu

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Sports Editor

You wake up a little tired, aching; sneezes soon follow. The soreness doesn't go away and the sneezing gives way to coughing. Before you know it you're in the bathroom, bowing to the porcelain god. Bad news: You've got the flu.

Ten to 20 percent of the U.S. population gets sick from the flu during any given year, according to the Center of Disease Control. Forty-four Elon students sought treatment from the health center for the flu this year, a percentage lower than the national average.

Katherine Parrish, Elon's director of Health Services, said she believes the infection rate at Elon was blunted by the center's vaccination campaign, one of its biggest projects, along with vaccinations for meningitis.

"We started [giving the vaccine] the last week in October and we offered it here at the health center to anyone who wanted it," she said. "We had some of the nasal flu vaccine and we gave out some of that, and we tried to get as many people as possible."

The center vaccinated 1,309 students and faculty, a number Parrish said she wished were higher. "I would like to have seen everyone get it, but traditionally they haven't come and gotten it when we offered it," she said. "That's why we ran out this year. More people were paying attention to the news and the children that died and so forth."

This year's flu season has been especially severe because the disease mutated, making itself more aggressive. Twelve young children died in North Carolina. The elderly and those with diseases affecting the strength of their immune systems are especially at risk of complications from the flu. The flu can also be deadly for people with heart disease. The CDC in Atlanta estimates that complications from the flu kill 36,000 adults annually.

Parrish said certain students are also at a greater risk of getting the flu.

"The students who are in residence halls are more at risk," Parrish said. "They have closer association. They're sharing close quarters. They're eating together in the dining facilities, and then a lot of people don't wash their hands as often

as they should and that's how you spread [flu] germs."

Because students risk getting the flu from people they live with, Parrish said they must be mindful in their everyday lives.

Parrish said the best ways to prevent getting sick from the flu are washing your hands, getting plenty of rest and not drinking after someone. Unfortunately, staying immune from the flu can be difficult because it is an airborne illness.

Freshman Anne Beckwith, who lives in a residence hall, said she gets a flu shot every year.

"I've always gotten flu shots because my mom has severe rheumatoid arthritis," she said. "I would get the flu shot to keep her from getting sick, but I figured it was a good habit to stick with here at Elon."

"It spread out in the community just as fast as it did here," she said. "Because it's a respiratory virus, with droplets from people coughing and sneezing, people can get it. If you were in Wal-Mart, you could've caught it by someone standing next to you coughing."

For students who contract the illness and go to the health center for

## Tips for preventing the flu and colds



1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 10 to 20 seconds.
2. Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth unless you've washed your hands.
3. Frequently wipe surfaces that are touched often by several people.
4. Get adequate sleep to keep your immune system efficient.
5. Drink extra water and eat a healthy diet.

care, Parrish, a nurse practitioner, prescribes medicines to lessen the symptoms.

"It's a viral illness so it's mostly treated symptomatically," Parrish said. "There is an antiviral, given in the first 24 hours of it, that shortens the course. It doesn't make [the flu]

go away, it shortens the course. Where you might have had it seven days, you have it three."

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