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### Flu Season: GWU Expert Says Do-It-Yourself Prevention Measures May Be Best Defense

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# Flu Season: GWU Expert Says Do-It-Yourself Prevention Measures May Be Best Defense

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Office of University Communications

November 9, 2012

## *Gardner-Webb's Dr. Greg Davenport and Center for Disease Control Weigh-In*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – While fall is a time of year when many people are glad to experience cooler temperatures and the beauty of Mother Nature, it's also a time when the flu season begins to make its mark. While there is no guarantee someone can prevent becoming a victim of the flu, Gardner-Webb University's Dr. Greg Davenport believes there are basic steps that can be taken to fight against the dreaded influenza.

"During this time of year, clinics and emergency rooms are filled with people experiencing the same symptoms," said Davenport. Those symptoms include low-grade fever, runny nose, cough, sore throat, and fatigue. "The patient wants an antibiotic. Unfortunately, an antibiotic is rarely the cure. For most of us, there isn't much a medical provider can do. In almost every situation [of the flu and common cold], you will get better provided you rest, increase your fluid intake, and allow the body time to recover," said Davenport.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), based in Atlanta, Ga., reports that flu season generally gets underway in October, but doesn't reach its peak until January or February. While flu complications can be serious for people of any age, the CDC warns that the most common victims are children, people over 50, pregnant women, and anyone with a chronic health condition. In a typical year, the CDC reports that five to 20 percent of the population will get the seasonal flu.

As for receiving an annual flu vaccination as a possible solution, CDC researchers say that determining how well the vaccine works is challenging because it doesn't work the same for everyone. However, studies support the conclusion that it benefits public health.

Davenport points to simple measures such as good hand washing, coughing into your sleeve, and simply staying home when you are sick to reduce and prevent contamination. "When bacteria, viruses, and parasite make contact with a hand, they are easily spread to self or another person. Contact with these organisms are common when people: Don't wash their hands after using the bathroom, shake hands with someone who is sick, or perhaps they didn't shake that person's hand but unknowingly made contact with a doorknob they had just touched," he said. "A hand to mouth movement can easily introduce a micro-organism to the body. Since hand exposure to these organisms – at some point during the day – is inevitable, a brisk hand washing is key to decreasing the odds of you becoming ill."

While the overall health impact of the flu varies from year to year, the CDC says that “by identifying flu symptoms and knowing about treatment and prevention options, individuals can be better prepared to get through the season.” Davenport added, “Just grab the soap.”

More information about the GWU Physician Assistant Program is available through Davenport’s office at 704-406-2369. Further details on the CDC can be obtained online at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).