

**The flu vaccine is in!** This year, our Medical Assistant, Serena will give flu shots without an appointment Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9-11:30 and Monday – Friday 1-4 pm (she does not give shots on Tuesday mornings). Although you do not need an appointment, please call in before you make your way to the office to be sure she will be available. If you have medical issues you need to discuss with your physician in person, you may make an appointment and have your shot at the same time.

### **2015-2016 Flu Season Q&A**

*Will the flu vaccine be a better match this season?* Probably. This year's trivalent vaccine (which is the one we carry) will have one new strain of the A and B viruses. Even when the vaccine is a less-than-ideal match, it still decreases risk of getting the flu and its severity.

*Is the quadrivalent vaccine preferred?* Not yet. Either the trivalent or the quadrivalent is fine to receive. The extra B strain in the quadrivalent vaccines broadens coverage but it costs more than its trivalent counterpart.

*Should seniors get the high-dose vaccine?* Seniors have a choice and need to weigh risks and benefits. Immune response weakens as people age, so the high dose has four times as much antigen as the standard dose to help boost immunity. The high dose seems to prevent one more case of flu for every 217 people over age 65 compared to the standard dose. The downside is the high dose can cause more local reactions and flu-like symptoms.

*Can patients get other immunizations with the flu vaccine?* Yes! Ask about other vaccines such as pneumonia, shingles, or Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis/whooping cough). The state of Washington is experiencing a Whooping Cough epidemic. If you are not sure you have been vaccinated in the last 10 years, be sure to ask about the Tdap. Seniors now need two different types of Pneumonia vaccinations. Make sure you have received both of them or know when you need your second shot.

## **Vantage has received a limited supply of free vaccines from the CDC to give to adult patients over age 19.**

(We always have free vaccines on hand for children up to age 19). The vaccines include: Pneumonia, Shingles, Tdap, and Hepatitis A and B combined. In order to qualify you must fall under one of the following categories:

**Medicaid eligible:** A patient who is eligible for the Medicaid program. (the terms "Medicaid-eligible" and "Medicaid-enrolled" are equivalent and refer to patients who have health insurance covered by a state Medicaid/Apple Health program)

**Uninsured:** A patient who has no health insurance coverage

**American Indian or Alaska Native:** As defined by the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (**25 U.S.C. 1603**)

**Underinsured:** A patient who has health insurance, but the coverage does not include vaccines; a patient whose insurance covers only selected vaccines.

We do not want you to be without your medications, so planning ahead is especially important. The doctors' days off are updated on our website calendar ([VantagePhysicians.net](http://VantagePhysicians.net)). Please take note of these days off when planning your medication refills. Dr. Ritchie is out Tuesdays and Dr. Kershnik is out Thursdays. It is not unusual for the doctors to leave early in the afternoon to make house calls. Giving the office at least 2 business day's notice is essential for making sure you never miss a medication refill.

<b>Sept</b> Sunday 6 Office Closed Sunday	Monday 7 Labor Day Closed	Tuesday 8 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	Wednesday 9	Thursday 10 Dr. Kershnik out	Friday 11 NO LAB SERVICES	Saturday 12 Office Closed
13 Office Closed	14 Dr. Ritchie out	15 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	16	17 Dr. Kershnik out	18	19 Office Closed
20 Office Closed	21	22 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	23	24 Dr. Kershnik out	25	26 Office Closed
27 Office Closed	28	29 Dr. Kershnik out No AM Lab	30	October 1 Dr. Ritchie out	2 Dr. Kershnik out	3 Dr. Kershnik off Office Closed
<b>October</b> 4 Office Closed	Monday 5	Tuesday 6 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	Wednesday 7	Thursday 8 Dr. Kershnik out	Friday 9	Saturday 10 Office Closed
11 Office Closed	12	13 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	14	15 Dr. Kershnik out	16	17 Office Closed
18 Office Closed	19	20 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	21	22 Dr. Kershnik out	23	24 Office Closed
25 Office Closed	26	27 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	28 Dr. Ritchie out	29 Dr. Ritchie out	30 Dr. Ritchie out	31 Dr. Ritchie off Office Closed
<b>November</b> 1 Dr. Ritchie off Office Closed	Monday 2 Dr. Ritchie out	Tuesday 3 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	Wednesday 4	Thursday 5 Dr. Kershnik out	Friday 6	Saturday 7 Office Closed
8 Office Closed	9	10 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	11	12 Dr. Kershnik out	13	14 Office Closed
15 Office Closed	16	17 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	18	19 Dr. Kershnik out	20	21 Office Closed
22 Office Closed	23	24 Dr. Ritchie out No AM Lab	25	26 Office Closed Thanksgiving	27 Office Closed Black Friday	28 Office Closed

## Cold Medicine Words of Wisdom from Dr. Kershisnik

When was the last time you ventured into the cold medicine aisle at your local drugstore? Both sides of the aisle are stacked high with remedies -- brand name, generic, homeopathic, "natural," "new and improved," bubble gum, grape, cherry flavored, and chewable. And yet, only two or three are ever among those I recommend to my patients.

Most cold medicines contain multiple ingredients and often only one of those ingredients is needed. This leaves the leftovers to create unwanted side effects. While I could write paragraphs about studies suggesting the ineffectiveness of most cough syrups, the dangers of using some nasal sprays, and the shaky science behind Echinacea's popularity, I would rather empower you with a glossary of common ingredients and their generic names. If you become a label reader, you can avoid unwanted and unneeded "extras" in your medicine cabinet and hopefully avoid unpleasant side effects.

*Pseudoephedrine*: Sudafed is the most common brand name but it is a common ingredient in almost every cold medicine. It is also the "D" in over the counter allergy medicines such as Claritin-D. It constricts blood vessels in the nose to relieve congestion. It can also constrict other blood vessels leading to an increase in blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, ask your doctor before using this. It can also make you jittery and cause insomnia. Don't take this before bedtime or you'll be sorry!

*Guaifenesin*: Common brand names include Mucinex in a long acting tablet, and Robitussin in its liquid form. This is my favorite ingredient because it loosens up mucous in lungs and sinuses where it likes to hide and breed bacterial infections. This ingredient is in most "non-drying" cold medicines and does a good job of preventing a cold from turning into an ear or sinus infection. At very high doses it could cause nausea, but in general has no dangerous side effects.

*Dextromethorphan*: This is the "DM" in some cough syrups and is the only ingredient in my favorite cough syrup Delsym. It is a very mild cough suppressant (meaning you will still cough but perhaps not as often or as violently!) It is safe to take in the daytime. For a severe night time cough you may want to ask for a prescription cough medicine from your physician as codeine and its derivatives are the only true cough suppressant.

*Diphenhydramine*: Benadryl is the name you would most likely recognize for this common antihistamine. This medicine is most effective for allergic reactions. It is a common ingredient in some night time cold medicines however because of its side effect of sleepiness. It is used to combat the insomnia side effect of pseudoephedrine (see above). It is sedating for most people so should not be taken before driving. Some adults and children have the opposite effect and experience hyperactivity. Everyone should have this in the medicine cabinet for unexpected allergic reactions. Take this instead of Tylenol PM to avoid unnecessary Tylenol! If you take this for a garden variety cold all you will do is dry out your nasal passages and risk a sinus infection when things can't drain properly.

*Loratadine*: Claritin, Alavert, AllerClear, etc.! This dizzying array of brand names all refer to the same non-sedating antihistamine. Translated this means allergy medicine that won't conk you out! This is a great medicine for allergies but is very expensive. Knowing the generic name and becoming a label reader will possibly save you money as there are some significant price differences. Don't waste your money on this medicine for the common cold. Claritin commercials have suggested that Claritin-D is good for your cold. Remember our cheap friend pseudoephedrine way back at the beginning of this article? That's the "D!" Save your dollars for some chicken soup and leave the antihistamine on the counter.

I hope this was a helpful guided tour through the cold medicine aisle. Please remember, however, that your health situation is unique. Ask your Vantage Physician if you are unsure about an over the counter cold medicine. Any cold symptoms lasting over two weeks should prompt a visit or phone call to our office. May you all have a happy and healthy fall and winter!

## Stay Connected

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Remember to follow Vantage on Twitter [@VantageDoc](https://twitter.com/VantageDoc) to stay up to date on the latest news from the practice. We will tweet important updates from office and health related news. If Facebook is more your speed we are also on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Vantage-Physicians/265293256815313>. Both links and the doctor's up-to-date calendar can be found on our website at [vantagephysicians.net](http://vantagephysicians.net).

## Got Old Meds?

Placing medicines in the trash or flushing them down the drain may seem like the easy answer, but medicine in unsecured trash bins can be stolen and wastewater treatment plants do not effectively remove these drugs from our environment. As a result, measurable amounts of drugs end up in Puget Sound.

The office will take your expired or old medications you don't need anymore and send them to a third world country where they can be of use. Feel free to bring your unwanted medicines **in their original container** anytime during office hours.

If you have [controlled substances](#) such as pain medications or ADD prescriptions, they can usually be taken to your nearest law enforcement office for destruction. Locally, you can take them to:

[Thurston County Sheriff's Office](#) - (360) 867-2664 , 2000 Lakeridge Drive S.W., Building 3 in Olympia. ,Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

[Lacey Police Department](#) - (360) 459-4333 , 420 College Street SE, Lacey, WA 98503, Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

For a complete listing go to: <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/solidwaste/medicine/medicine-home.htm>



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