

## HEALTH FAQ

### Breaking down the difference between a cold and influenza

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** What is the difference between a cold and the flu? — A.T.R.

**ANSWER:** Both colds and influenza (the “flu”) are respiratory illnesses that are caused by viruses. Influenza is caused specifically by the influenza viruses, which come in two main types (A and B). Influenza A is further broken down into different subtypes based on hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N).



**Dr. Keith Roach**  
Contributing columnist

H1N1 and H3N2 are currently the most-common circulating influenza A viruses. Even within these subclasses, there is strong variability among flu viruses, which is one reason why we need a new flu vaccine each year.

Many viruses cause colds. Rhinoviruses (“rhino-” is the Greek word for nose) are the most common, but corona-, parainfluenza- and enteroviruses, as well as respiratory syncytial viruses, are all well-known causes

of respiratory illnesses, which can be difficult or impossible to tell apart from any other type of cold.

Unfortunately, there are so many of these viruses, some of which change quickly and others that escape our immune system, so it is (so far) impossible to get immunity by an infection or a vaccine to all the cold viruses. Viruses are generally less severe than influenza.

It isn't always easy to tell flu from a cold, especially in young people. Both can cause a fever, cough, runny nose and sore throat. However, the flu often causes muscle aches, which can be severe. The flu tends to cause higher fevers, more cough and worse headaches, and it often comes along suddenly. (“I got hit by the flu truck.”) Runny nose and nasal congestion tends to be worse with a cold.

Since there is specific antiviral treatments for influenza, clinicians will sometimes make decisions on whether to treat a person based on their symptoms, or they may get a lab test to look for the flu specifically. (Some tests will also check for COVID-19, a special type of coronavirus, at the same time.)

People who are at a high risk for severe flu may be recommended antiviral treatment, whereas there is not a specific antiviral treatment for colds. It's particularly important for people over 65 and those with any heart, lung or immune system issues to get the influenza vaccine. The optimum time to get it was from October through the end of November.

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**DEAR DR. ROACH:** What do we now call what was once referred to as a “nervous breakdown” in the 20th century? — A.M.

**ANSWER:** I asked this question to my psychiatry professor way back in the late 20th century when I was a first-year medical student. My professor replied that the term didn't have a meaning anymore. There is no formal medical or psychiatric diagnosis of a “nervous breakdown.” The term is used by laypeople to describe when a person has severe impairment of their day-to-day function as a result of a psychiatric diagnosis, especially mood disorders like generalized anxiety disorder or major depressive disorder.

An adjustment disorder may resemble a major depressive disorder, but it occurs within a few months of a traumatic life event. A severe case might also be termed a “nervous breakdown.” It is not usually used to describe a person with acute psychosis (a term meaning a grossly distorted sense of reality), such as a person with schizophrenia or bipolar affective disorder in their acute and uncontrolled state.

All these conditions have effective treatments. Treatment starts by talking to someone, who might be your own regular doctor or a mental health professional. For people who are in acute distress with thoughts of hurting themselves, the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is an option in the United States and Canada.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

## A winning night at Boots & BBQ: Rodeo Royale raises \$85,000 for Gibson Cancer Center

**Amanda Crabtree**  
For The Robesonian

LUMBERTON — The Southeastern NC Agricultural Center came alive on Nov. 14 as Boots & BBQ: Rodeo Royale, presented by Smith's Refrigeration, brought our community together for an evening of fun and philanthropy.

The UNC Health Southeastern Foundation hosted its 13th Annual Boots & BBQ: Rodeo Royale, welcoming more than 400 guests for a memorable celebration of generosity, good food, great music and community spirit. This long-standing tradition continues to draw a true cross-section of our region, with multiple generations and communities coming together to enjoy a night that offered something for everyone. With the support of sponsors, vendors, volunteers and guests, the event raised approximately \$85,000 to benefit UNC Health Southeastern's Gibson Cancer Center.

Proceeds from this year's event support the Hope Starts Here campaign and will directly enhance patient care at Gibson Cancer Center, including improvements to the center's main lobby. These updates will create a more welcoming and supportive space for patients and families during some of life's hardest moments.

The Foundation extends heartfelt appreciation to all sponsors who helped make the evening exceptional. We are grateful to our Presenting Sponsor, Smith's Refrigeration; and Hoedown Sponsors, Apollo MD, Robins and Morton and First Bank, for



Photo courtesy of UNC Health Southeastern

As this year's presenting sponsor, Smith's Refrigeration representatives and guests joined in the fun at UNC Health Southeastern Foundation Advocates' Boots & BBQ: Rodeo Royale.

their partnership and their commitment to strengthening healthcare in our region. We also extend sincere thanks to our Denim Sponsors, Contempora Fabrics and Robeson Health Care Corporation, for their steadfast support and belief in our mission.

This year's event introduced casino-style gaming, and it quickly became a guest favorite. Blackjack, Texas Hold'em, roulette, and other games were staffed by UNC Health Southeastern teammates who volunteered their time to deal, guide and encourage players throughout the night. Their energy helped create an atmosphere that was lively, engaging and full of spirited fun. The Foundation crowned its first High Roller for Hope, with Buddy Stephens earning the title after an evening of enthusiastic play.

Entertainment was provided by Snapback, whose sound, song selection and high-energy performance added excitement throughout the evening. Guests enjoyed a celebration that showcased the spirit and togetherness that define our community.

“From the first spin of roulette to the last spin on the dance floor, guests enjoyed a celebration that reflected the togetherness that defines our community,” said Sissy Grantham, executive director of the UNC Health Southeastern Foundation. “We are grateful for the generosity of our sponsors, the dedication of our vendors, and the enthusiasm of every guest who joined us. Boots & BBQ is special because our community shows up with so much heart, and their support helps us strengthen care for every patient who

depends on us.”

“The enthusiasm around the casino games was tremendous,” said Ron Roach, chairman, UNC Health Southeastern Foundation Board. “We are exploring opportunities to expand and elevate the experience for this sold-out event next year. It's exciting to watch this event grow and draw even more people together each year.”

Boots & BBQ: Rodeo Royale continues to demonstrate the power of generosity and the strength of community. The UNC Health Southeastern Foundation extends sincere thanks to every sponsor, volunteer, vendor, and attendee who helped make this year's event unforgettable.

Amanda L. Crabtree is the director of marketing & public relations at UNC Health Southeastern. Reach her by email at [amanda.crabtree@unchealth.unc.edu](mailto:amanda.crabtree@unchealth.unc.edu).

## Retirement celebration held for Dr. Dennis Stuart

**Amanda Crabtree**  
For The Robesonian

LUMBERTON — UNC Health Southeastern hosted a retirement reception on Nov. 21 for Family Medicine Specialist Dennis Stuart, M.D.

Dr. Stuart joined Southeastern Regional Medical Center in 2004 at the Dr. A.J. Robinson Medical Clinic in Lumberton. He has practiced in Robeson County since 1985. Previously, he served as chief medical officer of Robeson Health Care Corporation and treated patients at the South Robeson Medical Clinic in Fairmont. He has been a member of UNC Health Southeastern's medical staff since 1986. He transitioned to UNC Health Medical Group's UNC Health Primary Care at The Oaks in July 2022. He has served as President of the Network Operating Council as well as on the UNC Health Southeastern



Photo courtesy of UNC Health Southeastern

Pictured at the retirement celebration following the unveiling of his portrait and presentation of a crystal tower award, from left, are UNC Health Southeastern Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Joe Roberts, M.D., Dennis Stuart, M.D., and UNC Health Southeastern President & CEO Chris Ellington.

Board of Trustees.

A graduate of the Medical College of Virginia, he completed residency training at St. Elizabeth Hospital Medical Center in Youngstown, Ohio.

Last year, Dr. Stuart was named

the UNC Health Southeastern D.E. Ward, Jr., M.D., Physician of Excellence.

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## Gibson Cancer Center to hold free head and neck screening

Staff report

LUMBERTON — UNC Health Southeastern's Gibson Cancer Center will hold a free head and neck cancer screening on Monday, Dec. 8.

The event will be from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Gibson Cancer Center, located at 1200 Pine Run Drive in Lumberton. UNC Health South-

eastern is holding the event in collaboration with the East Carolina University School of Dental Medicine. The free community screening event is focused on early detection and prevention of head and neck cancers.

Those encouraged to attend include adults with a history of tobacco or alcohol use, first responders and public

safety professionals, anyone experiencing persistent symptoms such as hoarseness or voice changes, difficulty swallowing, ongoing sore throat, mouth sores that do not heal or swelling in the neck, or anyone who wants a preventative screening for peace of mind.

Participants should expect a brief, non-invasive head and neck

exam, personalized guidance based on results, educational materials on risk factors and prevention and referrals if follow-up care is needed.

The event is open to the community and walk-ins are welcome.

For questions, more information or to pre-register, contact one of UNC Health Southeastern's social workers at 910-735-8013.

**ROBESON COUNTY HOLIDAY 5K & FUN MILE**  
12.6.2025  
UNC HEALTH Southeastern

Scan to register - Come join the festive fun!

<b>5K RACE</b>	<b>FUN MILE</b>
9:00 am - \$25 entry fee	9:10 am - Free

UNC Health Southeastern Fitness Center, Lumberton  
Questions? Call (910) 738-5433 or visit [UNCHealthSE.org](http://UNCHealthSE.org).