

# WHY SHOULD YOUR LOVED ONE GET A FLU SHOT?



Every fall we see ads and PSAs about getting the flu shot. Why is it important that your older loved one (and you) get the flu shot?

Influenza – the flu – is a serious respiratory illness. The virus can cause sepsis and lead to complications for those who get sick. It can lead to:

- Changes in their mental status.
- Loss of ability to do the tasks they are used to doing.
- Organ failure.
- Amputations.
- Death.

People 65+ who get the flu have a 3-5 times higher risk of a heart attack and 2-3 times higher risk of a stroke within 2 weeks of being sick.\*

## Annual vaccines help protect against changing viruses

The flu virus changes, mutates, every year. Each year, different strains move across the world. Scientists try to match the annual vaccine to the circulating viruses. But even if it was the same virus, the protection from the vaccine doesn't last forever and the protection decreases over time.

## The flu shot can't give someone the flu

The flu vaccine can't give someone the flu. Some people do get the flu within days of getting the vaccine but it's an unfortunate coincidence. This happens if they are exposed to the flu virus and they get the flu vaccine within a day or two. Or they get the flu vaccine and they are exposed to the virus shortly after, before it had a chance to work. The timing may make it look like they got the flu from the vaccine, but that's not what happened.

## The flu shot isn't perfect, but it's helps prevent serious illness

Unfortunately, the flu vaccine doesn't provide 100% protection. Some years, it can provide up to 60% protection. But, if someone gets a flu vaccine and they still get the flu, typically the illness is less severe – they don't get as sick. They have a lower chance of being sick enough to be hospitalized.

## Some people don't get "too" sick when they get the flu, but will it be the same the next time?

It's true. Some people get the flu and they don't get terribly ill. But many people do. Why take a chance?

## Vaccinations help prevent sepsis

Sepsis is the most serious complication from the flu, which can result in death. It is a life-threatening emergency that happens when your body's response to an infection damages vital organs. Taking steps to prevent infection, like getting a flu shot, can help prevent sepsis.

## Protect your loved one from the flu

Living in a communal setting, like an assisted living facility, long-term care facility, or skilled nursing facility, increases a person's risk of getting infected with the flu virus. Their exposure to the flu is higher because of all the people who come and go, from employees and volunteers, to family and friends. Protect your loved one by giving them a flu shot:

- Ask the staff at their facility where and when they can get the flu shot.
- Ask if they can have the high-dose flu shot, approved for people 65 years and older.
- They can have the flu shot at the same time as the updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- Be sure they get vaccinated before flu season hits its peak. It takes up to 2 weeks for a flu vaccine to be effective. Flu season typically peaks between December and February.
- Get vaccinated yourself so you can keep healthy and prevent spreading the virus to your loved one.



Learn more at  
[SepsisandFlu.org](https://SepsisandFlu.org)

