

WHY SHOULD I GET A FLU SHOT?



Every fall we see ads and PSAs about getting the flu shot. Why is the flu shot important for you?

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

- You not being able to live independently anymore.
- Changes in your mental status.
- Organ failure.
- Amputations.
- Death.

“I had a flu shot last year. I don’t need one again.”

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.

“I had a flu shot once and it gave me the flu.”

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

“I got the flu shot and still got sick later.”

Unfortunately, the flu vaccine doesn’t provide 100% protection. Some years, it can provide up to 60% protection. But, if you get a flu vaccine and you still get the flu, typically your illness is less severe – you don’t get as sick. You have a lower chance of being sick enough to be hospitalized. So even if you do get the flu, you still benefit from the vaccine.

“I’ve had the flu and I wasn’t very sick.”

It’s true. People can get the flu and they don’t get terribly ill. But many people do. Why take a chance? 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.*

“What is sepsis and why should I be concerned?”

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.

“How can I protect myself from the flu?”

Living in a communal setting, like an independent living facility or an assisted living facility, increases your risk of getting infected with the flu virus. Your exposure to the flu is higher because of all the people who come and go, from employees and volunteers, to family and friends. Protect yourself by getting your flu shot:

- Ask your doctor where and when you should get your flu shot.
- You can have your flu shot at the same time as your updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- Get vaccinated before flu season hits its peak. It takes up to 2 weeks for a flu vaccine to be effective. Flu season usually peaks between December and February.
- Ask if you can have the high-dose flu shot, approved for people 65 years and older.



Learn more at
SepsisandFlu.org

