

The Flu Season is Unpredictable - Get Vaccinated!

National Influenza Vaccination Week is December 4-10, 2011

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against the flu. Vaccinations are safe, and not only do they keep you healthy, they also keep others healthy by eliminating other common illnesses. Vaccinate to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu.



It is also equally important to share with your primary care provider(s) whether you have been immunized. Sharing this information helps healthcare providers ensure they are meeting the needs of their patients and avoids duplication of doses.

Flu and Pneumonia Viruses are Unpredictable

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious, respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses, which can cause mild to severe illness and can lead to death. Influenza is spread by respiratory droplets; sneezing, coughing or hand contact with another person after touching your nose or mouth. Symptoms of the flu include a sore throat, muscle aches throughout the body, coughing, headache and fever. While most healthy people recover from the flu without complications, some high-risk with underlying chronic conditions are at risk for serious complications from the flu.

The flu season is unpredictable, however, the timing, severity and length of the epidemic depends on many factors, including what virus is spreading and whether it matches the vaccine. While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the three main flu strains that cause the most illness during the flu season.

Severe cases of the flu can turn into pneumonia, a serious lung infection caused by germs. Common symptoms of pneumonia include chills and fever, shortness of breath, stabbing chest pain and a persistent cough.

What Can You Do to Prepare for the Flu Season?

Vaccinations can reduce the risk for or the severity of illness, yet one-third of people age 65 and older do not get their influenza shots and more than one-third have never been vaccinated against pneumococcal disease, according to CDC data. Vaccination rates for both vaccines are lower among persons who need the vaccines the most; those with chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease and kidney disease.

The flu vaccination should be given each year. Those who received the pneumonia vaccination before age 65 for any indication should receive another dose of the vaccine at age 65 or later if at least 5 years have passed since their previous dose. Those who receive the pneumonia shot at or after age 65 should receive only a single dose.

In honor of National Influenza Vaccination Week, put yourself on the front line in infection prevention. Ensure your pneumococcal vaccination is up to date and get your annual flu shot. It is the right thing to do for you and your loved ones.

Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The CDC provides a variety of free resources and materials to utilize within your facility. These resources include brochures, posters, videos, web tools, as well as a prevention toolkit, among many others.

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/freeresources/index.htm>

CIMRO of Nebraska

CIMRO of Nebraska's website also offers related links and documents.

<http://www.cimronebraska.org/Home/Prevention/Immunizations.aspx>