

# Communicating the Benefits of Influenza Vaccination

**Influenza (flu) severity varies from year to year, but flu season always brings serious consequences.** While the 2020–2022 flu seasons were mild due to COVID-19 prevention measures, flu-related hospitalizations returned to pre-pandemic levels during the 2022–23 season. Although flu outbreaks are unpredictable, vaccination is the best protection for any influenza season.

**Flu vaccination is the best way to prevent flu and its complications.** Everyone age 6 months and older is recommended to get a yearly flu vaccine. This can markedly lower the risk of influenza-related illness, hospitalization, and death. Flu vaccination rates have fallen in recent years, leaving more people at risk of severe flu.<sup>1</sup> Take advantage of every opportunity to make a strong recommendation for flu vaccine and other vaccines your patients may need, such as COVID-19, RSV, and pneumococcal vaccines. Flu vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

From October 2023 – June 2024, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that flu caused<sup>2</sup>

35–65 million  
flu illnesses



16–30 million  
flu medical visits



390,000–830,000  
flu hospitalizations



25,000–72,000  
flu deaths



## What are the Benefits of Flu Vaccination?

Studies since 2013 have shown that vaccination<sup>3</sup>

### Reduces risk of flu illness

- ✓ In 2019–2020, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 7 million flu illnesses
- ✓ Flu vaccine has been shown to reduce the risk of having to go to the doctor with flu by 40% to 60%

### Reduces hospitalization and death

- ✓ Pediatric deaths from flu were cut in half for vaccinated children with underlying high-risk medical conditions and by two-thirds for healthy children
- ✓ Flu hospitalizations were cut in half for all adults (including those aged 65+)
- ✓ Flu hospitalizations dropped dramatically among people with chronic health conditions – by 79% for vaccinated people with diabetes and 52% for those with chronic lung disease
- ✓ Vaccinating long-term care facility (LTCF) staff reduces hospitalizations and deaths in LTCF residents

### Reduces severity of illness in hospitalized individuals

- ✓ Among vaccinated adults hospitalized with flu, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions decreased by more than half (59%), and they spent fewer days in the ICU compared to unvaccinated hospitalized people
- ✓ Children's risk of admission to a pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) for flu-related illness was cut by almost 75%

### Reduces risks for major cardiac events

- ✓ Risk of a major cardiac event (e.g., heart attack) among vaccinated adults with existing cardiovascular disease was reduced by more than one-third

### Protects pregnant people and their babies

- ✓ For vaccinated pregnant people, flu-associated acute respiratory infections were cut in half, and flu-associated hospitalizations were reduced by 40%
- ✓ Flu-related illnesses and influenza-related hospitalizations in infants under 6 months of age fell by half when their mothers were vaccinated

Vaccination rates\* for flu remain well below optimal levels

- 57% children 6 mos–17 yrs (same)
- 47% adults 18+ years (3%↓)
- 70% adults 65+ years (4%↓)
- 76% healthcare personnel (4%↓)
- 47% pregnant people (1%↓)

\*Estimates are for 2022–23 season (change is from 2021–22)<sup>1</sup>

## Quick Tips

### How to discuss flu vaccination

- **Recommend flu and other needed vaccines at every clinical encounter:** “I strongly recommend you get your flu vaccine today. It can be given at the same time as other vaccines.”
- **Keep it simple:** “Flu vaccine helps reduce your risk of hospitalization and death.”
- **Use a presumptive approach:** “Today we are giving you your annual flu vaccine.”
- **Communicate why we vaccinate:** “Vaccination prevents flu and its severe complications.” “Preventing the flu means preventing missed workdays and doctor appointments.”
- **Communicate the variability and unpredictability of flu:** “Flu seasons are unpredictable. The best way to prepare for any season is to get a flu vaccine.”
- **Acknowledge that flu vaccines are not always a perfect match with the circulating virus strains:** “While the flu vaccine won't prevent all illnesses, it is the best way to reduce severe flu illness and its complications.”

### Use the SHARE method<sup>4</sup>

- **Share** why a flu vaccine is right for a patient
- **Highlight** positive experiences with flu vaccines
- **Address** patient questions
- **Remind** patients a flu vaccine can protect them and their loved ones from serious complications
- **Explain** the potential costs of getting sick with flu

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 CDC. [www.cdc.gov/fluview/about](http://www.cdc.gov/fluview/about)
- 2 CDC. 2023–24 U.S. Flu In-Season Burden. [www.cdc.gov/flu/flu-burden/php/data-vis/2023-2024.html](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/flu-burden/php/data-vis/2023-2024.html)
- 3 CDC. What are the benefits of flu vaccination? [www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccine-benefits.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccine-benefits.htm)
- 4 CDC. Make a Strong Influenza Vaccine Recommendation. [www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/flu-vaccine-recommendation.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/flu-vaccine-recommendation.htm)

