

Communicating the Benefits of Influenza Vaccination

Influenza (flu) severity varies from year to year, but flu season always brings serious consequences. Since 2010, yearly hospitalizations and deaths from influenza have ranged from 120,000–710,00 and 6,300–52,000, respectively¹, including up to 298 deaths in children.² Though flu outbreak severity is unpredictable, flu viruses will continue to cause illness and deaths each year. Vaccination provides the best protection against seasonal influenza.

Flu vaccination is very safe and the best way to prevent flu and its complications. Everyone age 6 months and older (with rare exception) is recommended to get a yearly flu vaccine. Vaccination lowers 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.³ Take advantage of every opportunity to make a strong recommendation for getting a flu vaccine along with 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 2025–May 2026, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that flu caused:⁶

32–57 million
flu **illnesses**



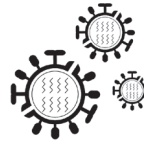
15–25 million
flu **medical visits**



390,000–800,000
flu **hospitalizations**



24,000–81,000
flu **deaths**



What are the Benefits of Flu Vaccination?

Studies since 2013 have shown that vaccination:⁷

Reduces risk of flu illness

- ✓ In 2024–25, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 10 million flu illnesses, 5 million medical visits, 180,000 hospitalizations, and 12,000 deaths⁸
- ✓ Flu vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of having to go to the doctor with flu by 40% to 60%

Reduces hospitalization and death

- ✓ Flu vaccination reduced the risk of flu-associated death by more than 75% among children with underlying medical conditions and by more than 85% among healthy children
- ✓ Flu hospitalizations were reduced by 40% in vaccinated adults 65 years and older

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 risk of health complications

- ✓ Flu vaccination reduces the risk of major cardiovascular events, including heart attack and stroke, among adults with cardiovascular disease
- ✓ Flu vaccination can reduce chronic heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease exacerbations by 80%
- ✓ Recent systematic analysis found flu vaccination associated with reduced risk of dementia⁹

Protects pregnant people and their babies

- ✓ For vaccinated pregnant people, flu vaccination reduced the risk of flu-related emergency department and urgent care visits by one half
- ✓ Flu related hospitalizations in infants under 6 months reduced by one-third and emergency visits in infants younger than 3 months reduced by one-half when their mothers were vaccinated

Vaccination rates* for flu remain well below optimal levels

- 50%** children 6 mos–17 yrs³ (5%↓)
- 42%** adults 18+ years³ (3%↓)
- 64%** adults 65+ years³ (6%↓)
- 76%** healthcare personnel⁴ (same)
- 51%** pregnant people⁵ (same)

*Estimates are for 2024–25 season (change is from 2023–24)

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:** "Millions of people get sick from flu each year. Vaccination helps prevent flu and its severe complications." "Preventing the flu means preventing missed work, doctor, and emergency room visits."
 - **Communicate the variability and unpredictability of flu:** "Flu seasons happen every year, but each season's severity is 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 your risk of severe flu illness and its complications."
- ### Use the SHARE method⁸
- **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/flu-burden/php/data-vis/index.html
- ² CDC. www.cdc.gov/fluview/surveillance/2026-week-27.html
- ³ CDC. www.cdc.gov/fluview/coverage-by-season/index.html
- ⁴ CDC. *MMWR*, 2026;75:164–171. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7512a2>
- ⁵ Razzaghi, et al. *Vaccine* 2025; 80:128823; doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2026.128823
- ⁶ CDC. www.cdc.gov/flu-burden/php/php/data-vis/2025-2026.html
- ⁷ CDC. www.cdc.gov/flu-vaccines-work/benefits/index.html
- ⁸ CDC. www.cdc.gov/flu-burden/php/data-vis-vac/2024-2025-prevented.html
- ⁹ Veronese, et al. *Ageing Research Reviews* 2022;73:10154. doi.org/10.1016/j.arr.2021.101534
- ¹⁰ CDC. www.cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/hcp/imz-standards/index.html

