

Health Awareness



The Flu Shot Is Still Your Best Shot For Protection Against The Virus

(NAPSA)—The flu is nothing to sneeze at: According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on average, 5 to 20 percent of the American population gets the disease every year. Flu season can peak at any time, though a January or February peak is most common in the U.S.

Although a trend in recent years has seen many waiting until flu activity breaks out to get a flu shot, waiting is not the advisable thing to do. The CDC says everyone 6 months and older should get a flu shot—and the sooner you get one, the better.

“It takes up to two weeks for the body to build up full immunity following a flu shot,” explains Walgreens chief medical officer, Harry Leider, M.D. “During the holidays and busy travel season, we’re typically exposed to more germs and viruses, which is why you really don’t want to put it off until the last minute or wait until your neighbors and co-workers are already getting sick. The last thing anyone wants to do is have to cancel a family vacation or important event due to illness.”

How Do I Know If I Have the Flu?

Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. Some people infected with the flu have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

How Effective Is the Flu Vaccine?

The efficacy of the flu vaccine can vary from season to season. However, the CDC cites that flu vaccination lowers the risk of hospitalization by 61 percent in adults age 50 years and older and that in typical years, flu vaccination results in a 71 percent reduc-



Vaccination continues to be the best way to protect yourself against the flu.

tion in flu-related hospitalizations among adults of all ages.

The important thing to remember is that the vaccination continues to be the best way to protect yourself and those around you throughout the season.

What About Cost?

Since implementation of the Affordable Care Act, health plans and insurers must cover flu shots at no cost (no co-pay or co-insurance) to patients. So if you have health insurance, your flu shot shouldn’t cost you anything. Coverage may vary among some providers, so ask your pharmacist, doctor or health plan if you have questions.

For those without insurance, some health departments and companies such as Walgreens have programs that offer flu shots at no cost to qualifying individuals.

Can I Get the Flu From the Flu Shot?

No, you cannot get the flu from the flu shot. This is merely a myth; in fact, there are numerous benefits to getting the flu shot. In addition to protecting yourself and family members, when you get the vaccine, you’re also helping any individuals you may know who are at greater risk of becoming seriously ill—older adults, those with weakened immune systems, young children and the like.

Where Can I Get My Flu Shot?

You can check with your physician, and now most pharmacies offer flu shots daily. Walgreens, which vaccinates walk-ins during all pharmacy hours, lets you help a child in need just by coming in to get your shot. For each vaccination administered at its pharmacies and clinics, the company donates a lifesaving vaccine to a child in a developing country in partnership with the U.N. Foundation. To date, it has helped provide more than 7 million polio and measles vaccines through this Get a Shot. Give a Shot campaign.

What Else Can I Do To Protect Myself Against the Flu?

The CDC says you should take these everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs:

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you do get sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, except to get medical care or for other necessities.
- Cover your nose and mouth, preferably with a tissue, when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that can become contaminated.
- Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them. They can make illness milder, prevent serious complications and shorten the time you are sick.

Where Can I Learn More?

For further information, visit www.Walgreens.com/GiveAShot.