



Asthma, Diabetes And Other Health Conditions Increase Flu Risks

(NAPSA)—The CDC urges the millions of Americans with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, stroke, or heart or lung disease to get a flu vaccine. A chronic health condition, even if it's well managed, increases a person's risk of serious illness from the flu. This could result in a sudden and costly trip to the hospital—or even death.

“We have known for years that the flu is a serious disease, especially for people with certain chronic health conditions,” says Dr. Anne Schuchat, Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service and CDC's Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. Last season, nearly 92 percent of adults hospitalized with flu had a long-term health condition, as did about 53 percent of children sent to the hospital.

Health conditions that increase the risk of flu-related problems include:

- Asthma and chronic lung disease
- Brain and central nervous system conditions
- Heart disease
- Blood disorders
- Diabetes, kidney and other endocrine and metabolic disorders
- Liver disorders
- Weakened immune system
- People under 19 years old and on long-term aspirin therapy
- Obesity.

The chronic conditions most reported for adults sent to the hospital with flu include heart disease (37 percent), metabolic disorders such as diabetes (36 percent), chronic lung diseases (26 percent) and asthma (21 percent). For children, the most frequent conditions (obesity not included) include



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asthma (20 percent), brain and nervous system disorders (13 percent) and chronic lung diseases other than asthma (6.3 percent).

The flu can also make chronic health conditions worse. For example, people with asthma may be more likely to experience asthma attacks while they have the flu, and if people with congestive heart failure get sick with the flu, their condition could become even worse.

The message is clear: People with chronic health conditions should get a flu shot every season as soon as vaccine is available in their community. This season's flu vaccine protects against the viruses most likely to cause the flu this year. Flu vaccines have been given for decades. They're safe and can't give you the flu. Close family members and caregivers also need to get vaccinated to reduce the risk of spreading the flu to those at high risk. People with chronic conditions should not get the nasal spray.

Flu vaccine is offered in many locations. Use the vaccine finder at <http://vaccine.healthmap.org> to find flu vaccine near you. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/flu or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).