Communicating the Benefits of Influenza Vaccination

Influenza (flu) severity varies from year to year, but flu season always brings serious consequences. During the 2024–25 season, hospitalizations for children and adults were the highest since 2009, when the current surveillance system started, and 275 deaths in children were reported.[1] Though flu outbreak severity is unpredictable, flu viruses will continue to cause illness and deaths each year. Vaccination is the best protection for any influenza season.

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.[2] 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 2024–May 2025, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that flu caused:[3]

47–82 million flu **illnesses**	21–37 million flu **medical visits**	610,000–1,300,000 flu **hospitalizations**	27,000–130,000 flu **deaths**



What are the Benefits of Flu Vaccination?

Studies since 2013 have shown that vaccination:[4]

Reduces risk of flu illness

- ✔ In 2023–24, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 10 million flu illnesses, 5 million medical visits, 118,000 hospitalizations, and 8,000 deaths[5]
- ✔ 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

55% children 6 mos–17 yrs (2%↓)
45% adults 18+ years (2%↓)
70% adults 65+ years (same)
75% healthcare personnel (same)
47% pregnant people (same)

*Estimates are for 2023–24 season (change is from 2022–23)[2]

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 severe flu illness and its complications."

Use the SHARE method[6]

- **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. Laboratory-Confirmed Influenza Hospitalizations https://gis.cdc.gov/grasp/FluView/FluHospRates.html
[2] CDC. Coverage by Season www.cdc.gov/fluvaxview/coverage-by-season/index.html
[3] CDC. 2024-25 U.S. Flu In-Season Burden. www.cdc.gov/flu-burden/php/data-vis/2024-2025.html
[4] CDC. What are the benefits of flu vaccination? www.cdc.gov/flu-vaccines-work/benefits/index.html
[5] CDC. Disease burden prevented by vaccination www.cdc.gov/flu-burden/php/data-vis-vac/2023-2024-prevented.html
[6] CDC. Talking about flu vaccination recommendations www.cdc.gov/flu/hcp/vax-summary/flu-vaccine-recommendation.html

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