



Prepare Your Practice To Fight Flu:

Make a Strong Influenza Vaccine Recommendation and Improve Your Influenza Vaccination Rates This Season

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“The thing that motivates me to FIGHT FLU is the ability to prevent illness and death. Flu is a bad disease. It causes millions of illnesses every year, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of deaths, and so anything we can do to prevent that – that is what I want to work on.”

– Daniel B. Jernigan, MD, MPH

Director, Influenza Division, CDC

Slide Deck Purpose

- Are you ready to fight flu? CDC is looking to you to make a strong influenza vaccine recommendation to patients and parents. This slide deck includes techniques to make a strong influenza vaccine recommendation and tips for increasing vaccination rates within your practice.

Learning Objectives

- Understand how to make a strong influenza vaccine recommendation.
- Learn how to answer some common questions about influenza.
- Learn how to answer some common questions about influenza vaccination.
- Understand best practices for increasing influenza vaccination rates in their clinical practices.

2018-2019 Flu Season

- A moderately severe season with two waves of influenza A activity. A(H1N1) predominated from October 2018 - mid-February 2019, and A(H3N2) predominated from February 2019-May 2019.
- The 2018-2019 flu season lasted 21 weeks, making it the longest flu season in 10 years. When compared to 2017-2018 flu season, hospitalizations and deaths remained high among children.

Cumulative Hospitalization Rates by Age:



2018-2019 Flu Season in Review

- While influenza vaccination effectiveness can vary, recent studies show that influenza vaccination reduces the risk of influenza illness by between 40% and 60% during seasons when circulating influenza viruses are well-matched to influenza vaccine viruses.
- 2018-2019 estimates will be published later this year; however, during the 2017-2018 flu season, flu vaccination averted an estimated 7 million flu illnesses, 109,000 hospitalizations, and 8,000 deaths."
- Vaccination can offer substantial benefit and reduce the likelihood of severe outcomes, including hospitalization and death even when vaccine effectiveness is reduced.



2019-2020 Flu Season: ACIP Recommendations

- The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that everyone ages 6 months and older receive a flu vaccine every year.
- Immunization providers are recommended to administer any licensed, age-appropriate influenza vaccine (IIV, RIV, or LAIV).
- There is no expressed preference for any flu shot or the nasal spray vaccine.
- More information at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/summary/summary-recommendations.htm>

Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (The Nasal Spray Influenza Vaccine)

In 2018, ACIP and CDC voted to resume the recommendation for the use of LAIV4 based on evidence suggesting that the new H1N1 component will result in improved effectiveness of LAIV against these viruses. LAIV4 continues to be approved for use in non-pregnant individuals, 2 years through 49 years of age. People with some medical conditions should not receive the nasal spray flu vaccine.

Importance of a HCP Flu Vaccine Recommendation

- Many consider health care professionals (HCPs) to be their most trusted source of information when it comes to vaccines.



**Strong,
Assumptive,
HCP Flu Vaccine
Recommendation**



**Vaccine Offer
During Visit**



**Higher
Vaccine
Acceptance**

- HCPs have a critical role in helping parents and patients choose vaccines.
- Perceptions about the strength of an HCP's recommendation may have implications for vaccine uptake.

Make a Strong Recommendation Using the SHARE Model

- CDC suggests using the SHARE five-part approach to make a strong flu vaccine recommendation to enable patients to make informed decisions about flu vaccination.



SHARE

the tailored reasons why the recommended vaccine is right for the patient given his or her age, health status, lifestyle, occupation, or other risk factors.



HIGHLIGHT

positive experiences with vaccines (personal or in your practice), as appropriate, to reinforce the benefits and strengthen confidence in vaccination.



ADDRESS

patient questions and any concerns about the vaccine, including side effects, safety, and vaccine effectiveness in plain and understandable language.



REMIND

patients that vaccines protect them and their loved ones from many common and serious diseases.



EXPLAIN

the potential costs of getting the disease, including serious health effects, time lost (such as missing work or family obligations), and financial costs.

Applying the SHARE Model



SHARE the reasons:

- “This vaccine can protect you and your family from getting sick from flu. By getting the vaccine today, you’ll be protecting yourself and the people around you who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like your children and parents.”



HIGHLIGHT positive experiences:

- “CDC recommends that everyone get a flu vaccine each year. I always get one myself so I don’t pass along flu to my patients and my family members.”



ADDRESS patient questions:

- “To answer your question, a flu vaccine cannot cause flu illness. There can be some mild side effects, but this is not flu illness. There are different side effects that may be associated with getting a flu shot or a nasal spray flu vaccine.”



REMINd patients that flu vaccines protect them and their loved ones:

- “Flu activity is going to start to pick up, and CDC says to expect more cases in the coming months. That is why I want to make sure I help protect you and your loved ones.”



EXPLAIN the potential costs of flu:

- “It’s important to get vaccinated this season because flu vaccination can reduce potential flu illnesses, doctor visits, and missed work or school due to flu.”

High Risk Populations

- Everyone 6 months of age and older should get an influenza vaccine every year. Even healthy adults can get sick with influenza and spread it to others.
- However, vaccination is particularly important for certain patients, like young children, who are at high risk of serious complications.
- When making an influenza vaccine recommendation to these patients share tailored reasons the flu vaccine is particularly important for their overall health.

High Risk Populations: Young Children

“Young children, even healthy young children, are at higher risk for serious flu-related complications. A recent study found that flu vaccination reduced the risk of flu-associated death by half (51%) among children with underlying high-risk medical conditions and by nearly two-thirds (65%) among healthy children.”

Consider bundling influenza vaccine recommendation with other vaccines



High Risk Populations: Pregnant Women

“Flu is more likely to cause severe illness in pregnant women due to changes in the body, such as the immune system, heart, and lungs that make them more prone to illness. A flu vaccine during pregnancy has been shown to help protect you and your baby from flu during pregnancy and can help protect your baby for several months after birth.”

Consider bundling influenza vaccine recommendation with other vaccines (i.e. Tdap)



High Risk Populations: Adults 65 Years and Older

“Due to the weakening of your immune system that happens with age, you are at high risk for serious complications from flu. In fact, in recent years, most flu-related hospitalizations and deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older.”



High Risk Populations: Adults with Certain Medical Conditions

“People with chronic medical conditions—such as heart disease, diabetes and asthma—are at higher risk for developing flu-related complications, ranging from worsening of these chronic conditions, to pneumonia, and other more severe complications.”



Addressing Questions and Vaccine Refusals

Every visit with a patient is an opportunity to recommend an influenza vaccine. Patients may have questions. Interpret questions as a request for additional information and be prepared to answer common questions.

- Address questions immediately and apply the SHARE model. Offer influenza vaccine in the same visit.
- If a patient or patients refuses an influenza vaccine, probe for reasons, and provide answers to any concerns.
- If a patient continues to refuse an influenza vaccine, share an informational handout to help advance education beyond the office visit and follow up at a later time.

Increase Vaccination Rates by Removing Common Perceived Barriers

- **Vaccination is not important** → Share vaccine benefit information.
- **Unlikely to get influenza** → Highlight influenza prevalence; use 2017-2018 season as example.
- **Influenza is not serious** → Share hospitalization statistics; highlight symptoms and cost-associated.
- **Influenza vaccine causes illness or side effects** → Note extensive research on vaccine benefits and address safety.

Why Should I Get a Flu Vaccine?

- It is estimated that during the 2017-2018 flu season, flu vaccination prevented an estimated 7 million flu illnesses, 109,000 hospitalizations, and 8,000 deaths.
- A 2017 study showed that influenza vaccination reduced deaths, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions, ICU length of stay, and overall duration of hospitalization among hospitalized influenza patients.
- Another 2017 study showed influenza vaccination can reduce a child's risk of influenza-related death by half (51%) among children with underlying high-risk medical conditions by two-thirds (65%) among healthy children.

“A flu vaccine is the best way to help prevent flu and its potentially serious complications. Remember that flu vaccine not only protects you, but it also can help protect those around you.”

I Received a Flu Vaccine Last Year and Still Was Sick with Flu

- You may have been exposed to flu before immunity from vaccination set in.
- You may have been infected with a flu virus that is different from what is in the vaccine.
- Influenza vaccine can vary in how well it works and some people who get vaccinated still get sick. It's important to remember that there is data that show that vaccination may have made your flu illness less severe than it would have been otherwise.
- Influenza vaccine only protects against influenza, not other respiratory diseases.

“Flu vaccine is the best available protection against flu. While some people who get a flu vaccine still get sick, vaccination can make their illness less severe.”

I Don't Need a Flu Vaccine, I Have Never Had Flu Before

- Influenza viruses are constantly changing, so getting an influenza vaccine every year is the safest option to obtaining immune protection.
- Influenza can be very serious and getting a flu vaccine also protects people around you, including those who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies and young children, older adults, and people with certain chronic health conditions.

"A flu virus is one of the fastest mutating viruses and can change year to year. Just because you did not have flu before does not mean you will not in the future. Every year healthy people get the flu who have never had it before."

Flu is Not That Serious

- Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that can cause mild to severe illness.
- Serious outcomes of influenza illness can result in hospitalization or death. Some people, such as older adults, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk of serious complications.
- CDC estimates that influenza has resulted in between 9.3 million and 49 million illnesses, between 140,000 and 960,000 hospitalizations and between 12,000 and 79,000 deaths annually since 2010.

“Flu can be very serious. Every year in the U.S., millions of people get sick, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized, and thousands of people die.

“Beyond serious health consequences, if you’re sick with flu, you risk missing work or school. In fact, flu causes U.S. workers to miss up to 17 million days of work each year.”

“Flu can be mild for some people and serious for others. We can’t say for certain how mild or serious your illness will be.”

Is There Any Risk of Serious Reactions To a Flu Vaccine?

- Serious allergic reactions to influenza vaccination are very rare.
- The most common side effects from the influenza shot are soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given.
- The viruses in the nasal spray vaccine are weakened. Side effects from the nasal spray may include: runny nose, wheezing, headache, or vomiting.
- If side effects do occur, they usually begin soon after vaccination and are mild and short-lived.

“There can be mild side effects associated with a flu vaccine but these are much less severe than symptoms often associated with flu illness.”

“There are different side effects that may be associated with getting a flu shot or a nasal spray flu vaccine.”

Can a Flu Vaccine Give You Flu?

- Influenza vaccines do not cause flu illness.
- Influenza shots are currently made in two ways: the vaccine is made either with influenza vaccine viruses that have been killed ("inactivated) and are therefore not infectious, or with no influenza vaccine viruses at all (which is the case for recombinant influenza vaccine).
- LAIV does contain live viruses; however, the viruses are weakened, so that they will not cause influenza illness.

"No, you cannot get flu from a flu vaccine. There may be mild side effects, but this is not flu illness."

Is the Flu Vaccine Safe?

- For more than 50 years, hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received influenza vaccines and there has been extensive research supporting its safety.
- Side effects from influenza vaccination are generally mild and short-lasting, especially when compared to symptoms of influenza.

“Flu vaccines have good safety record. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50 years, and there has been extensive research supporting the safety of flu vaccines.

A flu vaccine is the first and best way to reduce your chances of getting the flu and spreading it to others.”

Additional Tips in Communicating with Patients About Flu Vaccination

- Keep it simple.
- Complement statistics with personal stories.
- Avoid repeating the incorrect information.
- Tie flu vaccination to protecting your loved ones.
- Position annual flu vaccination as an important component to overall management of health.



Techniques to Improve Vaccination Rates

- HCPs report higher vaccination rates when working in practices that involve medical staff in vaccine delivery, offer influenza vaccination during routine visits, have standing orders, and monitor vaccine rates.
- Keep up to date on immunization recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).
- Create a culture of immunization within your practice.
 - Make clinical resources and informational handouts readily available for staff and patients.
 - Develop standing orders for influenza vaccination.
 - Empower all staff to take every opportunity to recommend influenza vaccination.
- Assess influenza vaccination status at every visit September to March; every visit is an opportunity to recommend an influenza vaccine.
- Send email, call, or text reminders to patients to make an appointment before influenza season and follow-up with missed appointments, especially with high-risk patients.
- Make referrals to other pharmacies if stock is unavailable .

HCP Resources

- [CDC Fight Flu Toolkit](#)
 - Make a Strong Flu Vaccine Recommendation Fact Sheets
 - #HowIRecommend Videos
 - Appointment Reminder Email Template
 - Materials for Patients
 - Pharmacist Guide and Talking Points
- [CDC Maternal Vaccination Toolkit](#)
- Additional Factsheets
 - [Preparing for Questions Parents May Ask about Vaccines](#)
 - [Talking with Parents about Vaccines for Infants](#)
 - [Free print materials](#)