

**October is the beginning of flu season.
Call your primary care physician for the flu shot today!**

With flu season just around the corner, it is time for you and your family to prepare. People with asthma and other chronic health conditions should receive their flu shot as soon as possible.

The flu season normally ranges from November through March. Peak months are generally December, January and February. This viral infection can cause a severe asthma attack, which can lead to potential complications including pneumonia and hospitalization for exacerbation of asthma.

Millions of people in the United States get influenza every year. An average of 36,000 people per year in the United States die from influenza, and more than 200,000 per year have to be admitted to the hospital as a result of the flu.

What are symptoms of the flu?

Influenza is typically spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing via respiratory droplets. If someone with the flu coughs on you, there is a high chance that you will develop flu symptoms within four days after the initial exposure to that person. Common flu symptoms include:

- Fever (usually high)
- Muscle aches and tenderness
- Headache
- Fatigue (extreme)
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea can occur but are more common in children

How can patients prevent the flu?

Influenza is caused by a virus, therefore antibiotics like penicillin will not cure it. The best way to treat the flu is to prevent it by getting a flu shot each fall in October or November, before the flu season begins. It generally takes two weeks to develop immunity from the shot.

What about the nasal-spray flu vaccine?

The nasal-spray flu vaccine is approved for use in healthy people 5 years to 49 years of age who are not pregnant. People with asthma and people with weak immune systems should avoid this type of flu vaccine.

How can the flu shot help patients with asthma and other chronic health conditions?

The symptoms of the flu, which include fever, chills, generalized muscle pains, headache, fatigue and cough, can be especially severe for patients with respiratory

diseases, such as asthma. In some cases, the influenza virus can damage the lungs, and influenza may make patients more susceptible to pneumonia. In severe cases influenza can be fatal.

Research has found that the flu shot decreases the risk of asthma exacerbations in patients by as much as 22% to 41%. In addition, it can also protect against acute asthma exacerbations in children. Vaccinating all children with asthma could prevent up to 78% of asthma hospitalizations and emergency room visits during influenza seasons.

When should patients receive the flu shot?

Patients often wait until they are exposed to the influenza virus to get immunized; however, the optimal time for patients to receive the shot is before they are exposed to the virus. Getting the flu shot early gives your body time to build immunity to the strains of influenza predicted to be most prevalent in the months to follow.

Are there risks from getting the flu shot?

You cannot get the flu from the flu shot. If you feel sick with flu-like symptoms after the shot, you may have caught another respiratory virus or already had the flu virus in your system when you got the shot. The flu shot does pose some concern for people allergic to eggs. The influenza vaccine is grown in chicken eggs. Although almost all the egg protein is filtered out of the vaccine, people with egg allergy should check with their allergist/immunologist before receiving the flu shot.

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