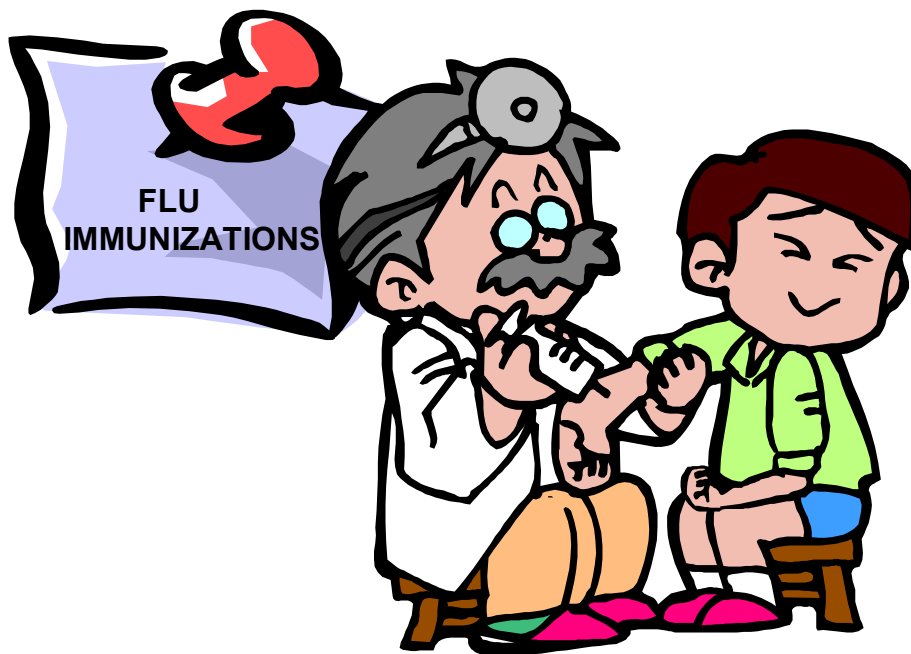




PRIME TIME HEALTH
*PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF OLDER PENNSYLVANIANS

ALL ABOUT THE FLU



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Influenza, “the flu”, is a contagious disease caused by a virus. It can be particularly dangerous to individuals over the age of 65. Learn about the flu by reviewing the following questions and answers.

What is the proper name for the “flu”?

The answer is influenza.

General Flu

The flu is a disease caused by?

A virus.

Is the flu contagious?

Yes.

What areas of the body does the flu affect?

Lungs, respiratory – nose, throat.

Symptoms of the flu include?

Sudden high fever, chills, sneezing, headaches, severe muscle & joint aches, sore throat, dry cough, runny nose.

How is the flu transmitted?

Airborne through inhalation. Via hands after coughing, sneezing or improper hand washing, especially before eating.

History

What disease killed 20 million people worldwide in 1918?

Influenza.

Flu season runs from ?

December through March.

More than half the casualties of servicemen during WWI were caused by what?

The flu.

What strain of the flu caused some health concerns in the '70's?

Swine flu (vaccine).

When did they begin administering flu immunizations?

Started giving immunizations in the '40's in the military, according to CDC.

Vaccine

How often should I get the flu shot?

Once a year. Flu shots only work for a single season since the strain of virus changes annually.

What is the flu vaccine made of?

Current vaccines use inactivated viruses that cannot cause the flu.

How do they determine what type of vaccine to make?

Each spring the National Center for Disease Control determines which viruses are expected the following fall. Those specific viruses are used to produce the flu shot.

What is the name of the "gun" that is used to inject the vaccine?

Biojector.

What is used in the Biojector?

It uses compressed gas (carbon dioxide).

Flu Clinic

What do you need to bring with you when receiving the flu shot?

Medicare card or other insurance cards.

Where you can get the flu shot?

Grocery store, doctor's office, senior centers, drug stores.

Does Medicare pay for the vaccine?

Yes.

Pneumonia

How often should you get the pneumococcal vaccine?

Usually, only once.

Where can you get the pneumococcal vaccine?

Your doctor's office (and some public vaccination sites).

Can you die from the flu or pneumonia?

Yes.

Does Medicare pay for the pneumococcal vaccine?

Yes.

Can the pneumococcal vaccine be given at the same time as the influenza vaccine?

Yes – by using different injection sites without increasing side effects.

Cautions

When should you get the flu shot?

The best time is mid-October to mid-November.

- If you don't want to get the flu.
- If you are a senior citizen.
- If you have a serious medical problem, such as respiratory or heart problems.
- If you want to safeguard other family members and friends.

Who should get the flu shot?

- People 65 yrs of age or older.
- With a chronic illness, especially heart or lung problems.
- Who live or work with chronically ill people.
- Who are around children frequently.
- Who have a type of cancer or immunological disorder (or use certain types of medications) that lowers the body's normal resistance to infection.
- Who provide health care services.
- Who have demanding family or work responsibilities & can't risk being sick or taking sick leave.
- Who are 18 yrs of age or older and wish to reduce their chance of catching the flu.

What side effects can you expect after receiving the flu shot?

- Some redness, slight soreness at the injection site.
- Even smaller percentage has a headache or fever.

Who should not get the vaccine?

- Women who are in first trimester of pregnancy – consult physician.
- Anyone allergic to eggs, chicken or chicken feathers.
- Those who are sensitive to thimerosal (a mercurial antiseptic).
- Anyone who has had a severe reaction to a previous influenza vaccination.
- Anyone with a history of Guillain Barre Syndrome or other active neurologic disorder.
- Anyone who has had any type of vaccination within the last 14 days.
- Persons who are ill and have a fever.

Summary

Serious complications can result from the cold & flu, such as pneumonia, so it is important to get the influenza shot.

- No one gets the flu from the flu shot.
- Inexpensive or no expense to get the flu vaccine.
- The flu vaccine is being given in many convenient locations for older adults.
- Frequent hand washing, especially during flu season, can help to avoid getting the flu.

For more information go to the website of the American Lung Association at:
<http://www.lungusa.org/>