



Specialty Medicine Compounding Pharmacy

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# Competent Compounding

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November 2005 Tasleem Muhammad PharmD (cand)

## Should I get a Flu Shot This Year?

**It is almost wintertime again!** From November to April, the concern over the necessity of acquiring a flu vaccine arises. Influenza, also known as the flu, is a serious disease. It is a viral infection in the nose, throat, and lungs, and is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States. Each year in the United States, on average, 5% to 20% of the United States population catches the flu each year. More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from the flu complications and about 36,000 people die from flu (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2005).

**Who is at higher risk?** An influenza virus is the main cause of the flu among all age groups. The rates of serious illness and death that can result from the flu are higher among the elderly population (ages greater than 65), and children (less than 2 years). Additionally, individuals with diabetes, kidney dysfunction, heart disease and/or an immunocompromised system are also at high risk of catching the flu, regardless of age. According to the National Information Center, about 20,000 Americans (most

of which are high-risk individuals) die each year from the flu complications such as pneumonia.

**Why get a flu shot and how does it work?** Getting a flu shot is the primary method for preventing the flu, as it lowers rates of illness, hospitalization, and death. Each year, federal health agency officials try to predict which three flu strains are most likely to be prevalent in the U.S. the following year. That way, a vaccine can be made against these strains to prevent the flu.

A flu vaccine is medicine containing weakened or dead viruses. When a person takes in a vaccine, his or her immune system responds by producing antibody-substances that weaken or destroy disease-causing organisms. Therefore, when the person is later exposed to live flu virus of the same kind that was in the vaccine, the antibodies prevent that virus from making the person sick.

Getting a flu shot has been seen as 70-80% effective in temporarily preventing the flu of the season. They have also been 50-60% effective in preventing hospitalization

and pneumonia, and 80% effective in preventing death from the flu in those over the age of 65. (The National Vaccine Center)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

### The top five reasons to get flu shot:

1. It reduces the number of episodes of upper respiratory infection.
2. It reduces days of sick leave from work.
3. It reduces work absences.
4. It reduces physician office visits.
5. It reduces antibiotic use.

### Who does the CDC (The Centers for disease control and Prevention) recommend to have the flu shot (priority group)?

All children ages 6 months to 23

months.  
Adults ages 65 years and up.

People ages 2 to 64 with underlying chronic medical conditions.

All women who will be pregnant during the flu season.

Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

ties.

Children ages 6 months to 18 months who are on chronic aspirin therapy

Health care workers with direct patients care.

### Who should not have the flu shot?

People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.

People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome in the six weeks after getting flu shot.

People who have had a severe reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.

Children less than 6 months old.

People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait until their symptoms resolve.

Protect yourself and others from getting flu this season.

**Get a flu shot today!**

Kenny Walkup, RPh has attended training classes through the American Pharmaceutical Association to give flu shots. Specialty Medicine is a Medicare provider and biller for flu shots for Medicare recipients.