

Flu + You

Protect. Learn. Understand. Safeguard.
Educating older adults about influenza and prevention
From the National Council on Aging and Sanofi Pasteur



Influenza (commonly known as “the flu”), is a serious and potentially life-threatening disease, especially in adults 65 years of age and older.

- Influenza, also known as “the flu,” is a common respiratory infection caused by several related viruses.
- The flu is easily passed from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or through contact with fluids from an infected person’s mouth or nose.
- Symptoms of the flu often include high fever, headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and body aches.
- As we get older, our immune system typically weakens. This generally makes it harder for us to fight disease and may also make us less responsive to vaccines. As a result, adults 65 years of age and older are at increased risk of flu and its complications. For example, the influenza virus can cause worsening of chronic conditions and it can lead to death.
- Each year in the United States, nine out of 10 flu-related deaths and more than six out of 10 flu-related hospital stays occur in people 65 years of age and older.

The flu can worsen other health problems.

- The flu is especially dangerous for people with certain conditions that commonly affect older adults, including heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, and cancer.
 - People with these conditions are more likely to develop complications from the flu that can result in hospitalization and even death.

The best way to help protect against the flu is vaccination.

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the single best way to prevent the flu is to get an annual vaccination, which is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older.
 - Despite these recommendations, immunization rates among adults 65 and older are still far below public health goals. The leading reason older adults do not get the flu shot is not being aware they need it.
- Receiving the flu vaccination each and every year is the best way and first step to help protect yourself from the flu and spreading it to friends and family.

There is a vaccine that is designed specifically for adults 65 years of age and older.

- Adults 65 years of age and older have vaccine options. In addition to the traditional flu vaccine (which helps protect against three strains of the flu virus), there is also a quadrivalent vaccine (which helps protect against four strains), and a higher dose vaccine.
 - By improving the production of antibodies in older patients, the higher dose vaccine can provide a stronger immune response to influenza than traditional vaccines.
- These vaccine options are widely available at a doctor’s office or local pharmacy. An annual flu shot is a Medicare Part B benefit – this means that the vaccine is covered with no copay for Medicare beneficiaries 65 years of age and older.

**Talk to your health care provider today about the dangers of the flu,
the benefits of vaccination, and the best vaccine option to meet your needs.**