

'Care Share

Flu Season is Upon Us

– A Friendly Reminder from Your
Neighborhood Nurse

Well folks, it's that time of year again – flu season. While many of us look forward to the coming holidays and spending time with family, there are some that will be caught off-guard by that nasty little influenza bug. To decrease chances of contracting the flu there is one simple step you can take to protect yourself and those around you – get your flu shot.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months and older get their yearly flu vaccine. For adults 65 and older this is especially important due to the increase in risk for developing serious complications from the flu virus. As we age our immune system weakens, lessening our ability to fight off infection. For those that have other health complications, like diabetes, asthma and heart disease, that ability declines even more. Unfortunately, this leads to a rise in hospitalizations and even death from the flu virus. The CDC states that in recent seasons, 50% to 70% of hospitalizations and 70% to 90% deaths related to influenza in the United States have been among people 65 years and older. Numbers to not simply dismiss.

Vaccination does not guarantee complete immunity, but studies have shown that for those that receive the flu shot, severity and duration of flu symptoms are significantly reduced for those that contract the virus. And for those that insist that the flu shot “gives them the flu” – well, it simply does not. Some mild side effects of the vaccine may include fever, body aches, headache and tiredness, but usually pass in a few days,

and are far less harmful than actually getting the flu.

The CDC recommends that everyone receive their flu shot by the end of October, but if you haven't got yours yet, don't worry, IT'S NOT TOO LATE! Flu season peaks between December and February, and as long as the flu virus is circulating, you are at risk. It takes about two weeks for antibodies to build up in your system, so getting your vaccination sooner than later is important.



You can get your flu vaccine at several locations, including doctors' offices, pharmacies, the health department and even traveling clinics. The best part is, flu shots are covered through most insurances and are a guaranteed benefit through Medicare Part B, therefore you pay nothing. Free is a great price to pay for peace of mind!

If you have more questions regarding the risks of the flu and benefits of receiving your yearly vaccination, please, speak with your doctor or healthcare professional.

-Christine McGrath, RN

*All facts provided by the CDC
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

FDA warns of fraudulent and unapproved flu products

Excerpts from FDA News Release

As part of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's ongoing efforts to protect consumers from health fraud, the agency is reminding consumers to be wary of unapproved products claiming to prevent, treat or cure influenza, or flu. This year's severe flu season raises new concerns about the potential for consumers to be lured into buying unproven flu treatments, and even worse, buying counterfeit antivirals online from websites that appear to be legitimate online pharmacies.

As the flu continues to make people sick — and even cause deaths — unscrupulous actors may also be taking advantage of unsuspecting consumers by promoting their fraudulent products that have not been reviewed by the FDA to be safe and effective. The FDA is warning consumers to be alert, and try to steer clear of fraudulent flu products, which may be found online or in retail stores. We're advising consumers on some of the telltale signs to look for when trying to spot flu products that may be fraudulent. All of us must also continue to be diligent in doing our part to prevent the spread of flu however possible. People who are sick with flu-like symptoms and those who are at high risk of serious flu complications should see a health care professional as soon as possible to see if they should be treated with antiviral drugs."

Consumers should be aware that there are no legally marketed over-the-counter (OTC) drugs to prevent or cure the flu. However, there are legal OTC products to reduce fever and to relieve muscle aches, congestion and other symptoms typically associated with the flu.

Products sold online are fraudulent if they claim to prevent, treat or cure the flu, and have not been evaluated by the FDA for that intended use.

These flu claims may indicate that an OTC product is fraudulent:

- reduces severity and length of the flu;
- boosts your immunity naturally without a flu shot;
- safe and effective alternative to the flu vaccine;
- prevents catching the flu;
- effective treatment for the flu;
- faster recovery from the flu; or
- supports your body's natural immune defenses to fight off the flu.

Health fraud scams waste money, lead to delays in getting a proper diagnosis and treatment, and may even lead to more serious injuries or death. The FDA routinely **warns the public** about health scams and has recently taken action against companies promoting and selling unproven treatments for cancer, opioid addiction and other illnesses. However, there are numerous unapproved and potentially unsafe products that continue to be sold directly to consumers in part because companies or individuals can move their marketing operations to new websites.

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-warns-fraudulent-and-unapproved-flu-products>



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The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) helps to educate Medicare beneficiaries about ways to prevent, detect, and combat Medicare fraud. For more information about Medicare fraud, visit the Stop Medicare Fraud website at www.stopmedicarefraud.org.