

INFLUENZA AND FLU SHOTS

Statement of the problem

Viral infections are the most frequent asthma triggers and asthma patients that have the flu are more likely to develop more severe infections such as bronchitis or pneumonia. “The Expert Panel recommends that clinicians consider inactivated or live mist influenza vaccination for patients who have asthma. The mist is safe to administer in children over 6 months and adults who have asthma (Evidence A). However, the vaccine should not be given with the expectation that it will reduce either the frequency or severity of asthma exacerbations during the influenza season (Evidence B).” Source: Expert Panel Report, pg. 183.

BACKGROUND

Assessment

Educational Messages

- People with asthma and other chronic conditions are more likely to develop bronchitis or pneumonia if they get the flu.
- People with asthma or other chronic illnesses should get a flu shot in October or November every year. All family members over 6 months of age should also get a flu shot. This will help to prevent spreading the flu to the person with asthma.
- Flu vaccine should not be given with the expectation that it will either reduce the frequency or severity of asthma attacks during the flu season. Flu shots do not prevent colds, cause flu or make you sick. It is important to get a flu shot every year since the flu viruses change each year.

Flu

This information is taken from: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>

A Guide for Participants

WHAT IS THE FLU?

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs that is caused by influenza virus. The flu can spread from person to person. Most people with flu are sick for about a week, but then feel better. However, some people (especially young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with chronic health problems) can get very sick, be sick for longer, and/or die.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU?

Most people with the flu feel tired and have fever, headache, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and/or sore muscles. Some people, especially children, may also have stomach problems, diarrhea and a cough that can last two or more weeks.

HOW DOES THE FLU SPREAD?

Saliva (spit) and mucus (snot) contains flu virus. When people with the flu cough or sneeze virus droplets enter the air and when they wipe or blow their nose, they can spread virus to the objects they touch. people can get the flu by breathing in these droplets in the air or touching objects exposed to the flu virus.

HOW LONG CAN A SICK PERSON SPREAD THE FLU TO OTHERS?

The virus can spread 1 day before a person gets sick to up to 5 days after getting sick. This can be longer in children and in people who don't fight disease as well.

IS THERE MEDICINE TO TREAT THE FLU?

Over-the-counter medications can help reduce flu symptoms, but cannot make the flu go away faster. There are prescription drugs a person with the flu can take, but these drugs need to be approved by a doctor. Your doctor can discuss with you if these drugs are right for you.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS FROM THE FLU?

- Getting a flu vaccine every year is important, especially for elderly and people with chronic health problems like asthma or diabetes.
- Washing your hands with soap and warm water regularly throughout the day
- Staying away from someone you know is sick
- Coughing and sneezing into a tissue or the inside of your elbow instead of your hand to prevent spreading germs into the air and onto objects.

WHAT IS THE FLU VACCINE AND CAN IT MAKE ME SICK?

The flu vaccine is given to prevent a person from getting sick from the flu virus. **The flu vaccine cannot cause the flu**, but may cause minor flu-like symptoms for a few days in some people. The flu vaccine is specialized and changes every year which is why it is important to get a flu vaccine annually. There are different forms of the vaccine (injectable and mist). Talk with your provider about which form is right for you.

WHAT SHOULD I USE FOR HAND CLEANING?

Washing hands with warm soap and water will help protect you from germs frequently throughout the day. Antibacterial wipes or gels with alcohol in them (the gels should be rubbed into your hands until they are dry) work as well.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I GET SICK?

See your doctor if you or your child:

- has a high fever or fever that lasts a long time
- has trouble breathing or are breathing too fast
- has skin that looks blue in color
- are not drinking enough fluids or cannot keep food or liquid down
- seem confused, will not wake up, does not want to be held, or has seizures (uncontrolled shaking)
- gets better but then worse again
- has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes) that get worse

FOR CHILDREN

WHAT THINGS SHOULD I WATCH FOR IF MY CHILD GETS SICK?

- Call or go to a doctor right away if your child:
- has a high fever or fever that lasts a long time
- has trouble breathing or breathes fast
- has skin that looks blue
- is not drinking enough
- A flu vaccine is the best way to protect against the flu. The CDC recommends that all children with asthma from the ages of 6 months up to their 5th birthday get a flu vaccine every fall or winter (children getting a vaccine for the first time need two doses).

- children under 5 years of age who have had wheezing in the past year or any child with chronic health problems should get the flu shot.
- A nasal-spray vaccine can be given to healthy children 3 years and older (children under 5 years old who have had wheezing in the past year or any child with chronic health problems should get the flu shot)

SEEK EMERGENCY CARE IF YOUR CHILD:

- seems confused, will not wake up, does not want to be held, or has seizures (uncontrolled shaking)
- gets better but then worse again

FOR ADULTS

Contact your doctor if you have:

- a high fever or fever that lasts a long time
- trouble breathing or breathing fast
- have other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes) that get worse

For more information about flu, visit www.cdc.gov/flu

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION • SAFER HEALTHIER PEOPLE† On September 19, 2007 the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](http://www.fda.gov) approved use of the nasal influenza vaccine LAIV (FluMist®) for healthy children ages 2-4 years old (24-59 months old) without a history of recurrent wheezing, as well as for healthy persons ages 5-49 years who are not pregnant. Previously, approval was for healthy persons ages 5-49 years who are not pregnant.

Actions

CHW ACTIONS	PARTICIPANT ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise getting a flu shot each fall • Advise to protect against transmission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a flu shot each fall • Protect against transmission by good handwashing, staying away from sick people, covering your nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing.

Follow-up visits supplies

Education Handouts

- Cover Your Cough
- Questions and Answers about Influenza and the injectable Influenza Vaccine (the “flu shot”)

Refferals