

George Latimer
County Executive

Sherlita Amler, M.D.
Commissioner of Health

December 2019

Dear Physician, Medical Director and Office Manager:

National Influenza Vaccination Week is here and flu season is upon us, so please encourage your patients to get a flu vaccine this year and every year. A strong recommendation from you can make the difference in whether or not your patients get vaccinated.

This vaccine can be life-saving. A 2018 study showed that from 2012 to 2015, flu vaccination among adults reduced the risk of being admitted to an ICU with flu by 82 percent. A 2017 study in the journal Pediatrics showed that flu vaccination significantly reduced a child's risk of dying from influenza. The study, which examined data from four flu seasons between 2010 and 2014, found that flu vaccination reduced the risk of flu-associated death by half (51 percent) among children with underlying high-risk medical conditions and by nearly two-thirds (65 percent) among healthy children.

The CDC estimates that influenza has resulted in between 9.2 million and 35.6 million illnesses, between 140,000 and 710,000 hospitalizations, and between 12,000 and 56,000 deaths annually since 2010.

If you do not offer flu vaccines in your practice, please refer patients to local pharmacies and supermarkets where they can get their flu shots, often with no appointment. They also may call our clinics at (914) 995-5800. Please impress upon patients that they should get immunized soon since it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to be effective. Remind patients that:

- One shot can protect them from the common flu strains that are circulating this year.
- The vaccine is safe, effective and provides immunity for the entire flu season, which typically runs from October through April.
- The shot is not a live virus vaccine, so they can't get the flu from the shot.
- There are few side effects – the most common is temporary soreness or redness at the injection site.
- The nasal spray vaccine is live but is so weakened that it cannot cause influenza.

Who should be vaccinated?

- Almost everyone age 6 months or older
- Anyone age 50 and over
- Anyone with a chronic medical condition
- Anyone who takes care of an infant 6 months of age or younger
- Anyone who is pregnant

- Anyone who wants to avoid getting the flu and spreading it to others
- People who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza. See [People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications](#) for a full list of age and health factors that confer increased risk. They include children younger than 5, adults age 65 and older, pregnant women, residents of nursing homes, people with extreme obesity, and those with certain medical conditions.

Please share the attached flu handout with your patients. Consider adding a flu shot reminder to your office's on-hold message and to your website. Thank you for your cooperation.

Free flyers and brochures are available to download and print at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/freeresources/index.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/nivw/materials.htm>

Sincerely,



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