DISCUSSING THE FLU VACCINE: COMMON QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Making sure that patients understand the importance of flu vaccination can be a challenging task. These conversation points can help you alleviate their concerns and point them in the right direction—toward getting vaccinated against this serious and sometimes deadly disease.[1]

QUESTION: CAN I GET THE FLU FROM THE FLU VACCINE?

ANSWER:

- You can't get the flu from the flu vaccine—you can get the flu from someone else[2]
- Flu vaccines are made with viruses that are inactivated and not infectious or with no viruses at all[2]
- Common reactions to the flu vaccination may include[2]:
  - Soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site, which generally lasts 1-2 days
  - Fever, headache, and muscle aches
- You may have been infected with the virus before you got the flu vaccination or before the vaccine had a chance to take effect (it can take up to 2 weeks)[2]

QUESTION: IF I'M HEALTHY, DO I EVEN NEED TO GET VACCINATED?

ANSWER:

- Even healthy people can get sick enough from the flu to miss substantial time from work or school—and some end up hospitalized[3]
- Even if you only get a mild case of the flu, you can pass it on to people you care about—especially those considered high risk for flu-related complications (eg, adults 65 years of age and older and those with certain medical conditions)[4]

QUESTION: HOW DO I KNOW THE VACCINE WILL WORK?

ANSWER:

- The flu vaccine can still provide protection even if the vaccine is not a "good" match[5]
- Antibodies made in response to one vaccine can sometimes provide protection against different but related flu viruses[5]
- Even when the match is less than ideal, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still recommends flu vaccination for everyone 6 months of age and older[5]

NOTE: See back for age-specific flu information.

GET VACCINATED TO HELP PROTECT YOURSELF AND HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE FLU TO OTHERS

UNDERSTANDING THE UNIQUE FLU RISKS ACROSS AGE GROUPS

Use the information below to provide age-specific guidance for your higher-risk patients. These conversation points can help you educate them and point them in the right direction—toward getting vaccinated against this serious and sometimes deadly disease.[1]

PEDIATRICS

- The flu is more dangerous for **children** than the common cold[6]
- Children, especially those younger than 5 years of age, are at higher risk for serious flu-related complications[6]
- Vaccination is important for people around children to help prevent the spread to others[6]

ADULTS 50+

- As **adults** age, their immune system begins to decline[7]
- Compared with younger adults, adults 50+ more frequently have medical conditions that are linked to flu complications[4,8]
- Conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease increase the risk of hospitalization and heart attacks when combined with the flu[9,10]

ADULTS 65+

- For **adults 65+**, the flu is linked to 4 major causes of hospitalization[4,8]:
  – Pneumonia – COPD[a] – Heart disease – Stroke
- 90% of flu-related deaths occur in adults 65+[11]
- The high-dose vaccine is designed specifically for adults 65+ and is associated with a stronger immune response following vaccination[12]

[a] COPD = Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Every time you speak with patients during flu season—be sure to ask them whether or not they've received their flu vaccination.

SUPPORTING YOUR IMMUNIZATION EFFORTS TO HELP YOU PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITIES

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