

Importance of Influenza and Pneumonia Vaccinations for Seniors

The statistics

- Influenza and pneumonia together represent the 7th leading cause of death for people age 65 and over in America.
- For the elderly, the chance of death from influenza and pneumonia is greater than the risk of death from an automobile accident.
- Of around 32,400 annual American flu-related deaths, 90% are people age 65 and over.
- Of around 52,000 annual American pneumonia-related deaths, the majority are people age 65 and over.
- Of around 225,000 American flu-related hospitalizations, over half occur for people age 65 and over.
- 1.2 million Americans are hospitalized annually with pneumonia.

More reasons to get vaccinated against influenza and pneumonia

Weakened defenses

Older bodies' natural defense systems tend to decrease, which places older people at greater risk of flu and pneumonia. Vaccines can ward off or at least weaken the severity of these viruses.



Protection for friends/family

If a senior gets influenza or pneumonia, those who come in contact with the senior are at risk of catching it. Getting the vaccines can help protect those who are close to seniors and reduce the chance of spreading these diseases.

Free

Medicare pays 100% of the cost of influenza and pneumococcal vaccines for Medicare beneficiaries. For people not covered by Medicare, state health departments often offer free vaccines.

Accessible

In most states, immunizations for adults can be administered by pharmacists in a community pharmacy. Many people find this is a convenient way to get their immunizations.

Safe

Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines are safe. You cannot get the flu from taking the influenza vaccine. Influenza vaccine may cause temporary soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection site. Some people get mild fever or aches that can last up to 1 or 2 days. Pneumococcal vaccine can also cause mild redness or pain where the shot is given. Less than 1% of those who get the shot develop a fever, muscle aches, or more severe local reactions.

Effective

The flu vaccine can be as much as 70 to 90 percent effective for healthy seniors; and according to the National Network for Immunization Information, hospital patients who have received the pneumonia vaccine:

- Have a lower incidence of respiratory failure
- Have a lower incidence of kidney failure
- Have a lower incidence of heart attack
- Spend two fewer days in the hospital on average
- Are 40 to 70 percent less likely to die from complications from pneumococcal bacteremia than unvaccinated patients

At **Continuum Care** we can help to encourage and facilitate proper vaccinations as a part of healthy aging at home. To learn more about our home care services or to schedule a free in-home assessment, call us today at **(314) 863-9912** or **(636) 861-3336**.

Sources: CDC, Flu.gov