



## To Learn More

*Flu + You* is sponsored by the National Council on Aging, in collaboration with Sanofi Pasteur, to educate older adults and those who care for them about the seriousness of the flu, the importance of prevention, and available vaccine options.

Talk to your health care provider about flu prevention and your vaccine options.

Visit [www.ncoa.org/Flu](http://www.ncoa.org/Flu) for more information.

## Vaccination Options for Older Adults

As we age, our body's ability to fight disease generally declines due to a weakening of the immune system. This can result in our body not producing as much antibody to help fight influenza, commonly known as "the flu."

This means adults 65 and older may have a weaker immune response to a regular flu shot. Older adults have flu vaccine options, including the regular flu shot and a higher-dose vaccine developed specifically to address the age-related weakening of the immune system.

Influenza vaccines are available at retail stores, pharmacies, flu clinics, and many more places. You should get vaccinated at a place that is most convenient and comfortable for you. Flu vaccination is a Medicare benefit with no copay. Both vaccine options are widely available at a doctor's office or local pharmacy.

Flu + You

Protect. Learn. Understand. Safeguard.  
Educating older adults about influenza and prevention  
From the National Council on Aging and Sanofi Pasteur

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Flu + You



Preventing Influenza  
in Older Adults

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## Why Older Adults Are at Greater Risk

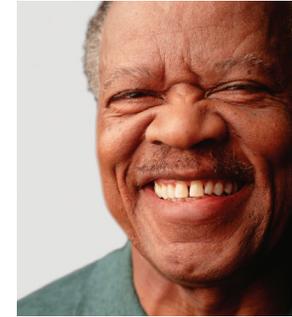
- As we age, our immune system typically weakens, even if we are healthy and active. This puts older adults at risk for the flu and flu-related complications.
- Influenza and pneumonia combined are the seventh leading cause of death in older adults in the United States.
- Adults 65 years of age and older typically account for more than half (50-60%) of flu-related hospitalizations and almost all (90%) of flu-related deaths.
- Additionally, the 2014-2015 flu season recorded the highest hospitalization rates among adults 65 years of age and older in recent history.

## Seniors Underestimate the Flu

A recent survey of 1,000 Americans 65 years of age and older found that many underestimate the seriousness of the flu and are largely unaware of their flu vaccine options:

- Only 8% of survey respondents are concerned about getting the flu despite seniors' high hospitalization rates.
- About one third of people 65 years of age and older are unaware that someone with chronic conditions like heart disease or diabetes would be at risk for complications from the flu.
- 62% got a flu shot in the past because their physician recommended it.
- But more than half (57%) are unaware that there is a flu shot specifically for their age group.

# Preventing Influenza in Older Adults



## Flu Is a Serious Disease, *Especially* for Older Adults

Influenza is a serious respiratory illness that results in thousands of hospitalizations and deaths every year. The flu is easily passed from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or through contact with fluids from an infected person's mouth or nose.

People sometimes refer to colds as the flu, but colds are usually milder and usually do not result in the same serious health problems commonly associated with the flu, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalization.

The flu can make existing health problems worse and is especially dangerous for people with chronic health conditions, like heart disease and diabetes, which often affect older adults.

- 86% of adults aged 65 and older have at least one chronic health condition, and 68% of Medicare beneficiaries have two or more.
- Among adults 65 years of age and older:
  - ~20% have diabetes
  - ~30% have heart disease

People with chronic health conditions are more likely to develop complications from the flu that can result in hospitalization and even death, and that is why it is important for this age group to get vaccinated.

### Vaccination Is The Best Protection

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and leading health experts recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older, with rare exception, get an annual vaccination as the single best way to help protect themselves from the flu.

Vaccination early in the flu season is especially important for adults 65 and older. It is important to get immunized against the flu not only to help protect yourself, but also to help prevent the spread of the flu and help protect those around you, such as family members and friends.

It is estimated that during the 2013-2014 flu season, nearly 50,000 hospitalizations were averted due to vaccination in those 65 years of age and older.