

Care For Older Adults? Care About Flu!

The flu can be serious for everyone – but for adults age 65 years and older, the risk of flu-related hospitalization and complications is particularly high.

Annual influenza vaccination is essential to help protect older adults 65+ against flu. There are specifically-designed influenza vaccines available to help protect older adults.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Older adults are at higher risk:

50%-70%
of flu-related hospitalizations

85%
of flu-related deaths

- Those with chronic conditions are at an even higher risk of developing serious complications
- Several weeks after recovering from flu symptoms, older adults may still be at an increased risk of a heart attack, stroke, or other cardiovascular problems
- Even if they recover from flu, older adults may never fully regain their pre-influenza health and abilities, significantly impacting their lifestyle

IMMUNOSENESCENCE

The gradual deterioration of the immune system due to aging – *immunosenescence* – results in an elevated risk of complications from flu in adults age 65 years and older. The weakened immune system makes it harder for older adults to combat disease, and decreases the immune response to standard influenza vaccines.

HOW CAN OLDER ADULTS BE PROTECTED?



The good news is that in the US, there are safe and effective influenza vaccines specifically-designed for older adults (65+). High-dose and adjuvanted vaccines are designed to overcome the effects of an aging immune system, producing an improved immune response.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS TAKE?



Older adults are much more likely to get a flu shot when it is offered or recommended by a healthcare professional. Talk to patients 65+ about the importance of annual flu vaccination and specific vaccines most beneficial for them.