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Frequently asked questions About the flu

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Q: Will I get the flu from the flu shot?

A: No. Flu vaccine is created from dead or inactive viruses that are not contagious.

Q: Do I need a flu shot every year?

A: Yes. Influenza viruses change every year. A new vaccine is used annually to fight the most current influenza virus. In addition, the antibody a person develops from the vaccine declines over time.

Q: When should I get a flu shot?

A: Influenza usually occurs from November until April, with activity peaking between late December and early March. The optimal time for flu shots is during October through November; however, it is clinically beneficial to be vaccinated through December and January.

Q: Why should I get a flu shot?

A: Influenza usually leaves its victims unable to function for several days and is responsible for more than 200,000 hospitalizations each year.* Getting an annual flu shot is your best protection.
*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005.

Q: Who should get a flu shot?

A: The CDC recommends that you receive a flu shot if you meet their criteria of high risk or fall under one of the following categories:

- Anyone who wants to reduce the risk of contracting the flu
- People over the age of 50
- People with high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, history of stroke or heart attack, a chronic disease, diabetes, compromised immune system, anemia, asthma or other breathing problems
- A health care worker with high-risk patients
- People who have had required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic, kidney or blood cell diseases
- People traveling to a foreign country
- People living or working with persons who fit into one of these categories

Q: Can I still get the flu after I get the flu shot?

A: Yes. Like other vaccines, flu vaccine is not 100% effective and does not take effect until one or two weeks after it is received. During this time, you will be just as susceptible to contract the flu as individuals who have not received the vaccination. Still, the best option to prevent flu is to get a yearly flu shot.

Q: Am I classified as high-risk?

A: You are classified as high-risk if you fall under one of the following categories:

- Anyone 65 years of age or older
- People who are in contact with persons at increased risk of influenza-related complications
- Residents or employees of a nursing home or other chronic care facility where some of the residents have chronic medical conditions
- People who have a chronic medical condition such as: asthma or another lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, or blood disease
- People who have immune system problems caused either by disease (e.g. HIV or lymphoma) or by medication (e.g. chemotherapy or radiation therapy)
- Women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during flu season (They must bring a physician's written prescription to the clinic location)
- Children or teenagers, 6 months-18 years of age, who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy (if under 18 years of age, see management at the clinic location for minimum age requirements)
- Health care workers who care for high-risk patients in the patients' homes

Q: What are the side effects of getting a flu shot?

A: For most people, vaccination causes no side effects. Less than 1/3 of those who receive a flu shot will experience some soreness at the vaccination site, and only 5 to 10 percent will suffer mild side effects such as low-grade fevers and headaches. Anyone who is allergic to eggs should avoid being vaccinated, since the virus used is grown in hens' eggs.

Visit www.bcbsnc.com/flu for more answers to your flu-related questions.

Each clinic has been allocated a supply of vaccine. Shots will be given on a first-come, first-served basis until the supply is depleted. A parent or legal guardian must accompany children ages 9-17 and provide written authorization (children under 9 should see their physician). In most cases, members with preventive care benefits will not be charged for receiving a flu shot at an in-network provider. Members with certain plans may not have preventive care benefits or may be responsible for a percentage of the cost of these benefits. Members should refer to their benefit booklet for more information about their preventive care benefits. Some members may be charged an office visit copayment when they visit their physician, depending on their specific benefits and the type of service performed. Nonmembers may receive a flu shot for \$30 (cash or check only). These flu shots will be administered by representatives of Maxim Health Systems, a division of Maxim Healthcare Services. In the event that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend that flu shots go to "priority groups" before the general public, Maxim Health Systems will give priority to those who fit the CDC's high-risk criteria.