

Answer Your Patients' Questions About 2017-2018 Influenza Vaccination

You'll play a critical role in the 2017-2018 flu season.

About one in 4 adults who had a flu vaccine last year got it at a pharmacy. Keep the trend growing...and be ready to help again this year.

Vaccinate now. Tell patients not to be overly concerned about waning immunity toward the end of flu season if they're vaccinated now.

Point out that flu is starting to be seen in some areas...and it takes 2 weeks for the flu vaccine to kick in.

Continue to immunize as long as flu is circulating...even in spring.

If pregnant women have concerns about getting the flu vaccine, explain that they're at high risk for flu complications...and vaccination can help protect them and their baby. Continue to vaccinate these women.

Use any age-appropriate injectable flu vaccine. Help patients weigh the pros and cons if you have multiple vaccines in stock.

Lean toward a quadrivalent for kids and younger adults. It contains an additional B strain...and children might be at higher risk of complications from B strains. Plus cost is similar to the trivalent.

For seniors, explain the high-dose trivalent (*Fluzone High-Dose*) seems to prevent one more case of flu for every 200 patients versus the standard trivalent...but may cause more fever, aches, and local reactions.

Fluad is another option for seniors. Explain that it's a trivalent vaccine with an adjuvant to boost immune response.

But it's too soon to say how *Fluad* compares to *Fluzone High-Dose* or other trivalent vaccines...or how either compares to the quadrivalent.

Don't recommend the intranasal (*FluMist*) due to efficacy concerns.

Assure patients that injectable flu vaccines cannot cause the flu. Explain that flu-like symptoms can be due to other viral illnesses...or patients may have gotten the flu before their shot became fully protective.

Feel comfortable giving other vaccines at the same time. Ask about other immunizations patients may need...such as pneumococcal, shingles, or Tdap. Give them in different arms...or at least one inch apart.

See our clinical resource for a good patient handout to encourage patients to get a flu shot...and our chart, *Flu Vaccines for 2017-18*, for approved ages, doses, thimerosal content, egg allergies, etc.

Key References:

-MMWR Recomm Rep 2017;66(2):1-20

-Clin Infect Dis 2017;64(5):544-50

-N Engl J Med 2014;371(7):635-45

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