



Fact Sheet (For Health Care Professionals)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Recommendations for Influenza Immunization of Health Care Professionals

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) clearly states that the single best way to reduce influenza transmission in health care settings is through increased influenza immunization.
- The CDC recommends that all health care professionals receive an annual influenza vaccination to prevent transmission to patients.
- Vaccination of health care professionals should begin as soon as influenza vaccine becomes available and should continue throughout the entire influenza season. The influenza season usually peaks in February, so getting immunized as soon as vaccine is available in your community or throughout the fall and winter is beneficial.

Health Care Professionals and Influenza Immunization Rates

- Health care professionals are frequently the source of influenza in health care settings. This is particularly troublesome for the vulnerable patients in their care, who may be at increased risk of severe complications, including influenza-related mortality.
- Outbreaks have been documented in high-risk patient care areas, including organ transplant units, long term care facilities and neonatal intensive care units.
- Influenza vaccination rates among health care professionals are extremely low. In any given year, annual influenza vaccination rates among health care professionals remains approximately 40 percent.
- Surprisingly, health care professionals cite reasons similar to the general public for not getting vaccinated, including the mistaken belief that the vaccine can cause influenza.
- Other explanations for why health care professionals do not receive influenza vaccination include:
 - Low awareness that they are in a group urged to receive annual influenza vaccination
 - Lack of access to the vaccine
 - Cost of the vaccine
 - Perception that influenza is not a serious disease
 - Low awareness and lack of concern about potential spread of the virus to patients

Benefits of Influenza Immunization of Health Care Professionals

- Influenza immunization is an important patient safety issue. Unvaccinated health care professionals can spread influenza to patients, coworkers and family members, leading to influenza-related illnesses and deaths.

- Annual influenza immunization of health care professionals:
 - Prevents severe illnesses and deaths
 - Protects patients, families and coworkers
 - Decreases use of sick leave

Infection Passed from Health Care Professionals Can Increase Morbidity and Mortality Among Patients.

Many believe only the elderly are at risk for increased complications from influenza. However, any individual with certain underlying medical conditions (e.g., asthma, diabetes, heart disease, immune deficiency) is at increased risk, as are infants and young children.