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## Need to Know for Patients and Families

*What patients  
and their  
families need to  
know before  
hospitalization  
or a nursing  
home admission*

# Vaccinations

**Why Is It Important?** Vaccination is an important method of illness prevention for those with chronic health conditions. Vaccinations reduce the risk for and the seriousness of illness. Even so, many people ages 65 and older do not get influenza (flu) shots and more than one-third have never been vaccinated against pneumococcal disease. The flu is a viral infection that is easily spread from person-to-person. Pneumococcal pneumonia is a serious bacterial lung infection that spreads from person-to-person. Each year the flu and pneumococcal disease cause many hospitalizations and deaths.

## What You Can Do:

### Flu Vaccination

1. If you are 65 or older, speak to your health care provider about getting the flu shot. Getting the flu shot is the best way to avoid getting the flu or lessening symptoms of the flu.
2. It is recommended that people with health care conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease (such as asthma), and kidney disease get a flu shot every year. If you have one of these conditions, speak to your health care provider about getting the flu shot.
3. Get the flu shot as soon as it is available, usually in September, October or November.
4. If you have a severe egg allergy, talk to your health care provider before getting the flu shot. In this case, the flu shot is administered in a medical setting supervised by a health care provider able to assess and manage any potential reaction.
5. Key facts about the seasonal flu vaccine are available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>

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NURSES IMPROVING CARE FOR HEALTHSYSTEM ELDERS

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### **Pneumococcal Vaccination**

- 1.** If you are 65 or older, ask your health care provider for about the pneumococcal vaccine. The CDC currently recommends two different kinds of pneumococcal vaccines. If you have already received a pneumococcal shot, check with your medical provider about receiving the other one.
- 2.** If you have asthma, diabetes, cancer, or disease of the heart, lung, liver or kidney or if you have had your spleen removed, discuss with your health care provider a plan to be vaccinated.
- 3.** Pneumococcal vaccines may be given at any time of the year.
- 4.** If you cannot remember if you had the pneumococcal vaccine, speak to your health care provider about vaccination.
- 5.** Key facts about the pneumococcal vaccine are available on the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/pneumo/public/index.html>

### **In General**

- 1.** You can get the pneumonia shot at the same time you get the “flu” shot.
- 2.** Medicare, Medicaid, HMOs, and private insurance companies cover these vaccinations.
- 3.** Side-effects are not common. Minor swelling and soreness may occur at the site of the shot. Treat by using warm compresses.
- 4.** Keep the vaccination record on the back of this sheet completed by your health care provider and take it with you for every health care situation.



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