

## **Fact Sheet for Medicare Beneficiaries: Protect Yourself against the Flu**

### **What is influenza?**

Influenza, or the flu, is a serious disease caused by a virus. Although most people with the flu are sick for only a few days, some need to be hospitalized. The flu can also lead to serious complications, such as pneumonia and death. Most deaths caused by the flu occur in people 65 and older. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache, cough, sore throat and muscle aches.

### **How can I prevent getting the flu?**

Get your influenza vaccination, or flu shot, every year before the influenza season starts. It is best to get the flu shot between October and December since the flu season starts in December and runs through April. The shot begins to protect you after one to two weeks and lasts a year.

### **Will the flu shot make me sick?**

The flu shot is safe. It cannot give you the flu. About one in four people will notice a mild fever, aches, soreness, or swelling in the area where the shot was given. *If you are allergic to eggs, talk with your doctor before getting the flu shot.*

### **Who should get a flu shot?**

People who are at a high risk for getting a serious case of the flu include

- all people 65 years or older
- all residents of long term care facilities
- all people who see a doctor regularly or were admitted to a hospital in the past year
- all people who have close contact with those who are at risk – children, healthcare workers, and nursing home and home health staff
- all people who have a disease or condition that lowers the body's resistance to infection
- any child or adult, including pregnant women, with serious long-term health problems, such as heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, diabetes and asthma

### **How much does the vaccination cost?**

The flu shot is covered by Medicare Part B. There is no deductible.

### **Where can I get the vaccination?**

Call your physician's office to find out where you can get your shot.



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