



## Vaccination Options for Adults 65 and Older

As we age, the body's ability to fight disease declines due to a weakening of the immune system, which results in the body producing fewer antibodies to help fight infection from the flu virus.

Recent studies have shown that the traditional flu vaccine might not work as well for people 65 years of age and older as it does for younger people. The age-related decline in the immune system affects the body's response to vaccination.

Adults 65 and older have two vaccine options available—the traditional flu shot and a higher dose flu vaccine. The higher dose vaccine is designed specifically for this population to address the age-related decline of the immune system by triggering the body to produce more antibodies against the flu virus than would be produced by the traditional flu shot.

Both vaccine options are covered by Medicare Part B with no copay.

To learn more, visit [www.ncoa.org/Flu](http://www.ncoa.org/Flu).

## To Learn More

*Flu + You* is a program of the National Council on Aging in collaboration with Sanofi Pasteur to educate older adults about the seriousness of influenza, the importance of vaccination, and available vaccine options for older adults.

**Talk to your health care provider today about your risk for influenza and the vaccination options that might be right for you.**

Visit [www.ncoa.org/Flu](http://www.ncoa.org/Flu).

# Flu + You



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**Protect. Learn. Understand. Safeguard.**  
Educating older adults about influenza and prevention  
From the National Council on Aging and Sanofi Pasteur

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## Preventing Influenza in Older Adults

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# Preventing Influenza in Older Adults

## Vaccination Is the Best Protection

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and leading health experts recommend that **everyone** 6 months of age and older get an annual immunization as the best way to help protect themselves from influenza.

Vaccination is especially important for adults 65 and older because they are at higher-risk for developing flu-related complications. Despite these recommendations, immunization rates among this age group are still well below public health goals.

It is important to get immunized against influenza not only to help protect yourself, but also to prevent the spread of influenza and protect those around you, such as family members and friends.

It is also helpful to take preventive measures, such as covering coughs, washing hands, and staying away from people who are sick, but these cannot replace vaccination as the best method of protection.

## Why Older Adults Are at Greater Risk

- As we age, our immune system weakens, leaving us more vulnerable to influenza and its related complications.
  - In fact, each year in the United States more than nine out of 10 flu-related deaths and more than six out of 10 flu-related hospital stays occur in people over the age of 65.
- The age-related decline in the immune system also affects the body's response to vaccination.
  - Adults 65 and older have two vaccine options available — the traditional flu shot, as well as a higher dose flu vaccine designed specifically to address the age-related decline of the immune system. Talk to your health care provider today!



## Flu Is a Serious Disease, Especially for Adults 65 and Older

Influenza, commonly called the flu, is a serious respiratory illness that causes thousands of hospitalizations and deaths every year. It is easily passed from person to person through coughing and sneezing or through contact with fluids from an infected person's mouth or nose.

Many people mistakenly refer to colds as the flu, but colds are usually milder and generally do not result in the same serious health problems related to influenza, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalization.

While the flu affects people of all ages, adults 65 years of age and older are more vulnerable to the disease and its related complications. No matter how healthy or youthful we appear, as we age our immune system weakens, making influenza vaccination extremely important for older adults.

Each year in the United States, on average, 226,000 people are hospitalized, and anywhere from 3,000 to 49,000 die due to flu-related complications. About six out of 10 of these hospitalizations and nine out of 10 of these deaths occur in people 65 and older.

Unfortunately, as we age, the likelihood of developing other chronic medical conditions (for example, heart disease, COPD, diabetes)

also increases, and having one or more underlying chronic condition further increases the risk of influenza-related death in older patients. In fact, 91 percent of adults 65 years of age and older have at least one chronic condition and 76 percent have two or more chronic conditions.

## For Anyone 65 and Older

- Learn about the seriousness of influenza.
  - Combined with pneumonia, influenza is the nation's seventh leading cause of death among adults 65 and older.
  - The flu causes thousands of hospitalizations and deaths in the U.S. every year.
- Protect yourself — the flu vaccine is the best way to help protect yourself and those around you from the flu.
  - There are vaccine options for every stage of life. Ask your health care provider about vaccine options designed to address the aging immune system of adults over the age of 65.