



2011 - 12 Flu Season

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that **every person** 6 months and older get a flu vaccine for the 2011-2012 influenza (flu) season. The flu vaccine will protect against the three most common flu viruses predicted this season:

- an influenza B virus,
- an influenza A (H1N1) virus, and
- an influenza A (H3N2) virus

Flu symptoms include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also experience vomiting and/or diarrhea. CDC suggests taking the following actions to protect yourself and others from the flu:

- **Get the flu vaccine.** This is the first and most important step a person can take to prevent the flu. Vaccination is especially important for those at high risk for flu complications. People at high risk include: young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma or diabetes and people 65 years and older. Vaccination is also particularly important for health care workers. Those who live or care for individuals at high risk such as child-care workers or someone caring for an elderly relative should also be vaccinated. The CDC recommends that people get vaccinated against the flu as soon as the vaccine becomes available in their community, but vaccination can take place at any time throughout the flu season. While flu seasons are unpredictable they can begin as early as October. And, it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body to provide protection against the flu virus infection. There are two types of flu vaccines: 1) live, attenuated – inhaled spray; 2) inactivated – injection. Your healthcare provider will help you decide which type is best for you.
- **Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose that tissue when you are done using it. Wash hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub. If you become sick with the flu, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Leave the house only for medical care or for other necessities.
- **Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.** While vaccinating is the best protection from the flu, antiviral drugs offer a second line of defense. Antiviral drugs are not vaccines; they are medications that keep flu viruses from

reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs can shorten sick time, make the illness milder and prevent more serious complications. Those at high-risk are most likely to receive antiviral drugs. Healthy people with the flu do not usually need to be treated with antiviral drugs. Antiviral drugs are only available with a prescription from your healthcare provider.

Flu vaccinations are a covered benefit for USFHP members and no co-payment is required. If you go to a non-participating provider, they may charge you a flat fee for the vaccine. You may submit your receipt along with proof of payment to the Plan's customer service department for reimbursement if the non-participating provider will not submit a claim to the Plan. The Plan will reimburse up to \$30.00 for the seasonal flu vaccine.

For more information, please visit the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>