

COURAGE TO CARE



A Health Campaign of Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, www.usuhs.mil, and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Bethesda, Maryland, www.cstsonline.org

Flu Season: *What Military Healthcare Providers Should Know*

Early flu season is not just a time for routine vaccination. It presents an opportunity for military healthcare providers to fortify patient relationships and engage in patient-centered prevention.

As the flu season progresses, your opportunity to effect change increases as each passing day identifies those select patients who are either “not interested” or “too busy” to get preventative vaccination. These patients are a risk to themselves and to those around them. For this group, it may be useful to ask, “how can I help you improve your preventative planning?” If the patient doesn’t agree with recommendations for

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immunization, then you have an opportunity to educate. If the patient does agree but can’t prioritize effectively, then you have a ‘teachable moment’ that could impact their health in ways far beyond “flu shot”. Your well timed intervention during this

‘teachable moment’ may help the patient onto a path that better optimizes health following proven prevention strategies. Sometimes featuring the right assortment of educational media is all you need to do! These well timed interventions may help patients follow their path of prevention strategies that optimize health.

Flu Information for Medical Professionals

The following information is taken from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Routine influenza vaccination is generally recommended for all persons ≥ 6 months of age
- Influenza vaccination is especially important for persons who may be at increased risk for medical complications (i.e. adults > 65 years of age, pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions)
- For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>

Prevention Strategies for Health Care Settings

Core prevention strategies for preventing transmission of influenza virus and other infectious agents within healthcare settings include:

- Administration of influenza vaccine
- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Appropriate management of ill HCP
- Adherence to infection control precautions for all patient-care activities and aerosol-generating procedures
- Implementing environmental and engineering infection control measures

Educating Patients About the Flu

The following information can be helpful to patients and enhance family health.

- Common symptoms of the flu include: fever (usually high), headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, nausea — more common in children)
- Preventing the flu involves the following good health habits for the entire family: avoid close contact with people who are sick; don’t expose others to you or your family if sick, wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based handwipes to protect from germs, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- If sick, get plenty of rest, drink lots of liquids, and adults should avoid using alcohol and tobacco
- Remind patients when taking medications to “Take only as directed.” Some patients may believe “if a little is good, more is better.”

Resources:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/>
- <http://www.flu.gov>