

# Risk Matters: Remind Your Patients to Get Their Flu Vaccine



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With the emphasis on COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, many patients may forget another respiratory virus that presents a significant health risk – influenza. It is important you educate your patients on the need to be protected from this potentially fatal virus, especially your patients who are 65 or older.

The dangers of the flu are increased this season because of the COVID-19 pandemic and especially the Delta variant. First, there is the risk of simultaneous infections or even back-to-back infections of COVID-19 and the flu. Second, many healthcare systems have been overwhelmed because of COVID-19 and there may not be capacity for patients who need hospitalization because of contracting influenza.

There are many reasons your patients may not be willing to get their flu shots this year. A significant amount of misinformation and fear is circulating about vaccines and their efficacy. There is also confusion among patients about whether they need a flu shot if

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they have been vaccinated for COVID-19. Others believe that because they are wearing a mask in public, washing their hands, and socially distancing, they are fully protected from the flu; while these measures help to reduce the risk, they do not provide the protection of a vaccine. Additionally, “vaccine fatigue” seems to be a real concern. Finally, some patients are reluctant to go to their doctor’s office to get a flu shot because they are afraid of contracting COVID-19 while at the office. You can alleviate these concerns by reaching out to your patients and addressing any questions they may have regarding the flu vaccine, informing them of the steps your practice has taken to protect patients from COVID-19, and encouraging them to get vaccinated.

The CDC recommends that anyone age 6 months or older should receive the flu shot unless they have contraindications.

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