Communicating the Benefits of Seasonal Influenza Vaccine

Influenza (flu) severity varies from year to year, but flu always brings serious consequences.1

To help patients understand the importance of protecting themselves and their loved ones, public health officials and providers should communicate the benefits of flu vaccination in helping to reduce disease outcomes, including hospitalization and death. Although the effectiveness of the flu vaccine can vary, overall the vaccine markedly lowers the risk of illness, hospitalization and deaths related to influenza.ii

CDC estimates that, from Oct 1, 2018–May 4, 2019, there were:

37.4 million – 42.9 million flu illnesses
17.3 million – 20.1 million flu medical visits
531,000 – 647,000 flu hospitalizations
36,400 – 61,200 flu deaths

What are the Benefits of Seasonal Flu Vaccine?

Research has shown that flu vaccination:

▶ Reduces Hospitalization and Death
✓ Pediatric deaths from flu were cut in half for children with underlying high-risk medical conditions and by two-thirds for healthy childrenxii,xiii
✓ Influenza hospitalizations were cut in half for all adults (including those 65+ years of age)x
✓ Influenza hospitalizations dropped dramatically among people with chronic health conditions – by 79% for people with diabetesi and 52%iv for those with chronic lung disease

▶ Reduces Severity of Illness in Hospitalized Individuals
✓ Among adults hospitalized with flu, intensive care unit (ICU) admissions decreased by more than half (59%), and fewer days were spent in ICU if vaccinatediii
✓ Children’s risk of admission to a pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) for flu-related illness was cut by almost 75%xi

▶ Reduces Risks for Major Cardiac Events
✓ Risk of a major cardiac event (e.g. heart attack) among adults with existing cardiovascular disease was reduced by more than one-thirdi

▶ Protects Pregnant Women and Their Babies
✓ For pregnant women, flu-associated acute respiratory infections were cut in halfi, and flu-associated hospitalizations were reduced by 40%i
✓ Influenza illnesses and influenza-related hospitalizations in infants under 6 months of age fell by half when their mothers were vaccinatedxii,xiii

Footnotes
ii CDC. CDC Seasonal Flu Vaccine Effectiveness Studies www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines-work/effectiveness-studies.htm
iv Ferdinands, 2019, Journal of Infectious Diseases. doi: 10.1093/infdis/jiy723
v Colophilou, 1997, Epidemiology & Infection. doi: 10.1017/s0950268897008825
vii Thompson, 2018, Vaccine. doi: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2018.07.028
x Thompson, 2014, Clinical Infectious Diseases. doi: 10.1093/cid/ciu750
xi Thompson, 2019, Clinical Infectious Diseases. doi: 10.1093/cid/ciy737