

Influenza Vaccine Fall 2024 Guidance

Influenza (“the flu”) is one of the leading causes of hospitalization and death each fall and winter. In an average year, 36,000 Americans die as a result of influenza and 300,000-500,000 are hospitalized. Most of these severe infections are among seniors, but people of all ages with underlying health problems, including young children, are at significant risk. About 40% of Americans get a flu vaccine each year. Vaccinated people have much lower rates of severe infections. Because 60% of us remain unvaccinated each year, lots of virus circulates through our county and many people of all ages get sick.

Even if you don’t end up with a bad case of the flu, you can be indirectly impacted. When our local ER fills up with people who get sick this winter, that results in a delays in care for people with appendicitis, injuries from car crashes, cancer complications, and other urgent health problems. The more people in Calvert who are vaccinated, the less virus that spreads through the community. In turn, there are fewer high-risk people lying in ER and hospital beds when nurses and doctors are needed for other health problems.

It is extremely important for grandchildren and anyone living with or caring for the elderly to be vaccinated. The most common way that grandparents become infected is through unintentional spread from their grandchildren. Also, those visiting and working in retirement communities and nursing homes should be up to date on their vaccinations. This is an important reminder that everyone, including parents of young children, have a role to play in preventing serious illness.

Both the influenza and covid vaccines are newly formulated each fall to best match the strains of viruses that are circulating in the U.S. Although influenza vaccines are “only” about 50% effective in preventing people from catching the flu, they dramatically lower the chance that people will become severely ill. For younger people, this means they are less likely to miss a week of school or work, and for older adults, they are much less likely to be hospitalized or die.

Please make the time to visit your doctor’s office or pharmacy to receive updated flu and covid vaccinations. All insurances cover vaccines recommended by medical experts. Both flu and covid inoculations are available without any copay. Vaccines save lives and keep millions healthier every year. If you have questions or concerns, you may find reliable information on the internet, but the best source of trusted advice is from your personal doctor or nurse practitioner.