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Protect Yourself, Your Family, Your Community, - Immunize!

Facts about Immunizing Against Influenza (Flu) and Pneumococcal (Pneumonia)

- About 36,000 Americans die on average per year from the complications of flu.
- In 2005, over 2000 older adults died from flu and pneumonia in North Carolina.
- Flu and pneumonia together represent the fifth leading cause of death among adults aged 65 and older in the U.S.
- African Americans are three to five times more likely to develop life-threatening invasive pneumonia disease than Caucasians.
- Lower flu immunization rates for African Americans, reiterates the need to develop adult immunization programs that address health disparities in immunization.
- Residents of long-term care facilities are particularly vulnerable to flu and flu related complications.
- Medicare part B reimburses fully for both flu and pneumonia vaccination.

Relevance

For Consumers:

- Flu season typically begins in October and lasts as late as May.
- In North Carolina, flu season usually peaks in February or March, so getting a flu vaccine late in the season – even in January - is effective.
- The flu vaccine does not cause flu.
- The vaccine to protect against pneumonia disease is safe and effective. It can be given at any time during the year.
- Immunization against flu and/or pneumonia reduces the risk of (1) hospitalization for chronic conditions and (2) death from flu or pneumonia related complications in older adults with chronic health problems.

For Service Providers:

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other leading healthcare organizations agree that immunizing health care staff against flu reduces the likelihood of virus transmission to high risk populations and improves quality of care for patients.
- Only 42% of healthcare personnel, especially hospital and long-term care facility staff are immunized against flu each year.

Questions for Local Planning Teams:

- To what extent do the county aging programs promote adult immunization?
- Do the county aging programs organize on-site immunization clinics at senior centers, community centers, malls, and other sites easily accessible by older adults? Is there a program that provides immunization services to the homebound older adults?
- What is done to encourage immunizing healthcare staff who work in hospitals or long-term care facilities?
- Are members of the community aware of the benefits of immunization for older adults? If not, what plans does the county aging program have to raise awareness on immunization issues?
- Do the county aging programs work with local health departments in defining and carrying out immunization priorities for older adults?

Recommended Strategies:

- Hold immunization clinics at convenient locations for older adults including senior centers, senior housing developments, malls, and community centers.
- Organize a mobile health unit and/or partner with programs such as Meals-on-Wheels to provide information, educational material, and immunization to homebound older adults.
- Collaborate with staff at local health departments to ensure seamless delivery of immunization services for older adults.



- Raise awareness using varied media outlets such as print and broadcast (radio and TV).
- Build capacity of organizations and agencies that work with older adults to offer on-site vaccinations for staff and patients.

Resources:

- Contact your state immunization branch at <http://www.immunizenc.com> for additional resources and the latest updates on immunization. You can also contact them by phone at 919.707.5550 or by email at imminfo@ncmail.net.
- Information about local flu clinics or the Flu clinic Finder can be obtained from [The Carolinas Center for Medical Excellence](http://www2.thecarolinascenter.org/ccme/) at <http://www2.thecarolinascenter.org/ccme/>.
- Visit the following site to read about the recommended adult immunization schedule: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5440-immunization.pdf>

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