Get the Flu Shot, Not the Flu!

Lesson
Written by Barbara (Bobbi) P. Clarke, PhD, RD, Professor, Extension Health Specialist, and Co-Director for the University of Tennessee Center for Community-based Health Initiatives and Dr. Steve Foster, Associate Professor, UT College of Pharmacy.

Goal
- Participants will understand the importance of an annual flu vaccine (shot).
- Those participants who need a flu vaccine will get one this fall.

Objectives
Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:
1. Describe why one should get the flu vaccine.
2. List who should get the flu vaccine in their family.
3. State when one should get the flu vaccine.
4. Identify two reasons why one should not get the flu vaccine.
5. List where to get the flu vaccine.
6. Determine if the flu shot is covered by their health insurance carrier or Medicare.
7. Develop a plan for keeping their immunizations up-to-date.

Key Points
1. Influenza (flu) is a serious disease. People die every year from the flu.
2. The best time to get the flu vaccine is between October and December.
3. A new flu shot is needed every fall.
4. Some people are at great risk for complications from the flu.
5. The cost of the flu shot may be covered by one’s health insurance. For people eligible for Medicare, Medicare Part B pays for the flu shot.
6. The flu shot does NOT cause the flu.

Time Required
This is a 30 minute lesson plan. The actual length of the lesson will vary due to the number of participants, their level of interest and their learning needs. The trainer’s teaching style will also influence the amount of time needed to teach this lesson.

Materials
Copies of the following for each participant:
- UT Extension Publication SP565, Are You Do For the Flu Shot This Fall?
- UT Extension Publication SP564, If You Have Diabetes, A Flu Shot Could Save Your Life!
- Poster (to display) SP578-A, If you Have Diabetes, A Flu Shot Could Save Your Life!
- Poster (to display) SP578-B, It’s Fall, Get the Flu Shot NOT the Flu!
- Exhibit (to display), It’s the Fall Season . . . Get the Flue Shot, NOT the Flu!
- Handout, My Immunizations Record
- Handout, My Action Plan to Get Immunized
- Pre-test, What Do You Know about the Flu Before This Program?
- Post-test, What Do You Know about the Flu After This Program?
- Newsprint, tape and markers.
Notes to the Trainer
This is a draft lesson plan. Please keep notes of things that need to be changed or added as a result of your experiences teaching your audiences such as questions you did not have an answer for, terminology people didn’t understand, creative ways to present the information and barriers to communicating the information to your audience.

This lesson is designed to be comprehensive in content so that you have adequate background information to present the information with confidence. Based on the educational needs and learning style of your audience and the time available to teach this lesson, you may not find it necessary to provide all the information in this lesson. The items in bold represent the information that must be addressed in this lesson. Please make sure that the information on the pre-test is addressed in the lesson. The pre-test should be given after the ice breaker. Tell the participants that this is a self-assessment questionnaire just to get them thinking about what they know about the flu and the flu shot. You may wish to tell them that this information is being collected to help the Center find out how much people know about the flu and the flu shot and how well the program is doing. Collect the pre-test. The self-assessment questionnaire (Post-test) should be given after the lesson. Collect these and distribute the questions and answer sheet.

Send the Pre- and Post-tests to:
Dr. Barbara (Bobbi) P. Clarke
Professor & Extension Health Specialist
The University of Tennessee Extension
Family & Consumer Sciences
119 Morgan Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996-4501
Phone: (865) 974-8197
Fax: (865) 974-5370
E-mail: bclarke@utk.edu

Content and Activities
Ice Breaker: Introduce the topic of the flu vaccine by asking the group what words come to mind when they hear the word, immunizations. List responses on newsprint. Responses may include:

- Baby shots
- Hurt
- Needles
- Doctor
- Disease
- Shot
- Sickness
- Stop disease
- Flu
- For children
- Polio
- Tetanus
- Pain
- Ouch!
- Epidemics
- Hepatitis B
- Make disease free

Distribute the self-assessment questionnaire (pre-test), What Do You Know About the Flu Before this Program? Ask the group to complete this self-assessment form and point out the answers will be discussed in this program.

Discuss the importance of immunizations.
• Immunizations protect against disease that can cause disabilities and even death.

• Know what shots your children need. All children must receive a series of immunizations by the time they enter school. **Don’t wait until they enter school because many shots are needed by the age of two.** Older children require immunizations too. Has your teen been immunized for hepatitis B?

• But what about adults? What immunizations do adults need? Ask the group to name some adult immunizations. List responses on newsprint. Responses may include: influenza (flu), tetanus, hepatitis B, pneumonia. Distribute the handout, *Vaccinations for Adults*, and handouts about other vaccinations that are appropriate for these participants.

• Referring to the handout, *Immunizations for Adults*, point out when and adult should get tetanus, hepatitis B and pneumonia vaccines.

• Ask the group if once a person is vaccinated, he/she is immune for life against illness. The answer is **no** because **some vaccines only offer protection for a certain amount of time.** For example, the flue shot only protects one from the flu for a year.

• Distribute the handout, *My Immunization Record*. Stress the importance of keeping a record of one’s immunizations. Suggest they take this record with them the next time they visit their doctor. Have their doctor check it and add any immunizations they forgot they had.

Point out that today’s program will address the importance of getting the flu shot.

Ask the group to share what they have heard about the flu shot or any concerns or experiences they have had with the flu shot. Encourage them to share with the group by sharing your experiences. Responses may include:

- the flu shot causes the flu
- the flu shot is only for old sick people
- the flu shoe is very expensive
- your insurance will not pay for it
- people really don’t need the flu shot
- you only need the flu shot once in your life
- the flu shot won’t prevent the flu
- the flu shot isn’t really necessary
- the flu shot makes you sick
- the flu shot doesn’t hurt that much

Ask if anyone has had the flu shot and to share their experiences. List these comments on newsprint and refer to these issues as you address them in this lesson.

Share with the group why one should get a flu shot.

• **What is the flu?** Influenza, also called the “flu”, is a highly contagious respiratory (nose, throat and lungs - areas where air moves in and out of the body) infection.
• **What causes it?** It is caused by the influenza virus. So antibiotics cannot treat it.

• **How is the flu spread?** The flu is spread easily from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. After a person is infected with the virus or “catches” the flu, symptoms usually appear within 2 to 4 days. The infection is considered contagious for another 3 to 4 days after symptoms appear. (A side point of interest: The name, influenza, comes from people thinking the flu was caused by the “influence of the stars and planets.” In the 1500s the Italians called the disease “influenza,” their word for influence.)

• **What are the symptoms for the flu?** Ask the group what the symptoms are for the flu? List on newsprint. Responses should include:

  - fever
  - chills
  - sore throat
  - headache
  - body aches
  - dry cough
  - runny/stuffy nose

The bottom-line is the flu will make you feel very “blue.” Unlike other common respiratory infections such as the common cold, the flu can cause extreme fatigue lasting several days to more than a week. Some people get so sick they need to be hospitalized. Thousands of people die each year from the flu. Most of the deaths occur among the elderly. Although nausea, vomiting and diarrhea can sometimes accompany influenza infection, especially in children, gastrointestinal symptoms are rarely present. The illness that people often call “stomach flu” is not influenza.

• Each year 1 out of every 5 people (20 percent of the population) contract influenza.

• The flu can lead to the development of serious complications such as pneumonia (inflammation of the lungs) and bronchitis (inflammation of the bronchial membrane of the lungs).

**Discuss how the flu can be prevented and common concerns about the flu shot.**

• Ask the group how the flu can be prevented? The answer is: **Get the flu shot! It is safe and effective.** And when people get the flu shot they help themselves and those around them. By avoiding the flu, they avoid giving it to friends, co-workers and family.

**Additional Information for the Trainer:**
Delays in distribution of the vaccine to health-care providers have prevented some people from getting their shots in October. The Centers for Disease Control is recommending that high-risk persons get the vaccine when first available and healthy people get the vaccine in November or later. October and November are the usual time for the vaccination. But people can get the flu shot anytime through March and still get protection from the flu. High-risk persons should call their doctor to find out when they can get the flu shot.
• Ask the group when the best time to get the flu shot is. **Fall (between September and December) is the critical time for getting the flu shot.** So people are vaccinated - protected from the flu - before the “flu season”, which is from November to the end of March every year.

• Protection from the flu develops about 2 weeks after the shot (time to allow the body to develop the antibodies to fight the flu virus) and may last up to a year. So you need to get the flu shot every year.

• **The viruses in the vaccine are killed, so one can’t get the flu from the vaccine.**

• **Can you get the flu even though you got the flu shot?** Yes. Flu viruses change often, and they might not always be covered by the vaccine. But people who do get the flu despite being vaccinated often have a milder case than those who did not get the flu. Also, because it takes about 2 weeks for protection to occur after the flu shot, a person exposed to the flu virus shortly before or during the two week period after the flu shot can get sick from the flu.

• **Are there medications available for the treatment of the flu?** Yes. While the flu shot is the best prevention against the flu, there are prescription medications available to help lessen flu symptoms and duration.

### Additional Information for the Trainer:

The following are prescription drugs available for the treatment of the flu:

- **Tamiflu**, a capsule, helps lessen the flu symptoms and duration in adults. The drug must be taken when a person is first exposed to others suffering from the flu.
- **Relenza**, an inhaled powder, works the same way as Tamiflu. Relenza is not recommended for people with chronic respiratory disease, such as asthma, or for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Two other drugs, **Symmetrel** and **Flumadine**, are available in tablets or syrup. These have been around a long time, but have a few more side effects than the newer medications.

Ask the group **who they think should get the flu shot and why.** List responses on newsprint. Responses should include:

**People who are at great risk for having medical complications:**

- People 65 years of age and older.
- Residents of long-term nursing homes or other long-term care housing.
- People with chronic diseases such as lung diseases (asthma, emphysema, bronchitis), diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, anemia.
• People who can't fight infections (immune system weakened) because of HIV/AIDS or other diseases that affect the immune system, long-term treatment with steroids, cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs.

• Children and teenagers 6 months to 18 years of age on long-term aspirin treatment, who, if they catch the flu, could develop Reye’s syndrome (causes come, liver disease, and death in children following a viral infection such as the flu).

• Women who will be 6 or more months pregnant or who will have just delivered during the influenza season.

People who may infect high risk populations with the flu:

• Health care workers such as doctors, nurses and other health care workers.

• Visiting nurses and volunteers who provide home care to people at high risk.

• Family members - including children - who live with persons in high-risk groups for the flu (household contacts).

Other groups:

• Students and staff at schools and colleges, to prevent outbreaks.

• Anyone who wants to avoid catching the flu can get a flu shot.

Ask the group if they fall into any of these groups. Do they have a family member who should get the flu shot? List responses on newsprint.

Stress that any person (6 months of age or older) who wishes to reduce the chances of getting ill from the flu should get the influenza vaccine.

Point out that some of these groups should get the one-time vaccinations for pneumonia. This vaccine can be given at the same time as the flu vaccine.

Discuss when people should NOT get the flu vaccine. People should consult their doctor before getting the flu vaccine if they:

• ever had a serious allergic reaction to eggs or a previous dose of the flu vaccine.

• have a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (inflammatory disease of the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord leading to weakness and paralysis of the legs, arms, breathing muscles and face).

• are moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled. If ill, people should wait until they recover before getting the flu shot. Reschedule the flu shot for another time.
Stress to the group that the **cost of the flu shot may be covered by their health insurance.** They should contact their health insurance carrier to find out if the shot is covered. If they are Medicare eligible, Medicare Part B pays for it.

Ask the group **where they would go to get the flu shot.** Responses should include the following:

- Doctor’s office
- Clinics
- Health Department
- Pharmacies
- Health Fairs

Point out that **pharmacists in Tennessee can give the flu shot** if certified. Share with them pharmacies and other sites that offer the flu shot.

**Closing**

Distribute the handout, *My Action Plan to Get Immunized.* Stress that getting the right immunizations is an important step in self-care. It is as important as getting enough rest and exercise to maintain one’s health. An action plan is a way to help a person set health goals and list ways to achieve them.

Review the components of the action plan and ask the group to take a couple minutes to complete it. Ask if some participants would like to share with the group their action plan.

Summarize the following:

- Some people need the flu shot such as person 65 years of age and older.
- Anyone (over the age of 6 months) can get the flu shot to avoid the flu.
- Use the record for keeping track of all the immunizations your family has had.
- Refer to the handouts to help determine if everyone has had the immunizations they need.
- Follow your immunization action plan to make sure you and your family get the necessary immunizations for protection from diseases.
- Distribute the publications, *Are You Due For The Flu Shot This Fall?*

**Evaluation**

Distribute the post-test, *What Do You Know About the Flu Shot After This Program.* Ask participants to complete this. After collecting the post-tests, share with them the answer sheet to the post-test.

*Remember to return the completed pre- and post-test to Dr. Clarke.*