

It's that time of year when you will start hearing more about the influenza vaccine or "flu shot". If you have had one before, you should start planning to get your shot for this year soon. If you have never had a flu shot before, it is something that you should seriously consider.

The influenza vaccine not only protects you from getting the flu, but it also protects people around you. This is particularly important if you have a family member who is at high risk for severe illness from viral infections (e.g., seniors, those with chronic health conditions, pregnant women).

Because flu viruses are constantly changing, the composition of flu vaccines is reviewed annually, and vaccines are updated to protect against the viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming flu season. Although it is not 100% effective at preventing the flu, it will significantly reduce your chances of getting very sick. A 2021 study showed that among adults, there was a 26% lower risk of hospitalization and a 31% lower risk of death from flu compared with those who were vaccinated versus those who were unvaccinated.

It is important to remember that it takes about two weeks after your flu vaccine for your body to become protected. Also, you cannot get the flu from the flu shot.

Studies indicate that it is safe to get both a COVID-19 vaccine and a flu vaccine at the same time. People who received both at the same time were slightly more likely (8% - 11%) to experience reactions such as headache, fatigue, and muscle aches than people who only received a COVID-19 vaccine, but these reactions were usually mild and resolved quickly.

If you have concerns or questions about the flu shot, you should speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

*Prepared by: Marilyn Okopny*

*GeriatRx Pharmacist Consultant*

