



ASSURE[®] BRILLIANCE

COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE & SUPPORT PROGRAM

Tis' the season for influenza

Like it or not, influenza (flu) season is fast approaching. Seasonal influenza can start as early as October and generally peaks around January or February.¹ The virus, however, can occur any time throughout the year.

Diabetes and Influenza

People with type 1 and type 2 diabetes are at a high risk for complications—including hospitalizations and even death—due to the flu. Why? People with diabetes generally have more difficulty fighting off infections because of their compromised immune system. And because decreased appetite is a common side effect of certain illnesses, including the flu, there is an increased likelihood for uncontrolled blood sugar. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that all persons—6 months of age and older—with Type 1 and 2 diabetes, receive annual flu vaccines.²

Injection or Nasal Spray

Flu shots are approved for individuals with diabetes. In contrast to the influenza nasal spray, the flu shot has a long-standing safety history. There is a precaution against giving the nasal spray flu vaccine to people with diabetes because the safety of this vaccine method in the diabetic population has not been established. The nasal spray is otherwise indicated for persons ages 2 to 49 years.²

Antiviral Medications

There are prescription “antiviral” medications that can be used for the treatment of the flu. They attack the flu viruses in the body and are different from antibiotics in that antibiotics attack bacterial infections. Antiviral drugs—if started within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms—may decrease the likelihood of individuals with diabetes from developing complications as a result of the flu.²

Pneumonia Risks

People with diabetes are also at increased risk of developing pneumonia as a result of having the flu. In fact, the the CDC recommends that individuals over age 3, who have diabetes, receive the pneumonia (pneumococcal) vaccine. People with diabetes are three times more likely to die from the flu and pneumonia than someone who does not have diabetes.³



Studies indicate that by having the pneumonia vaccine, a person is 60 percent less likely to get pneumonia. Despite these statistics, only about one-third of individuals with

diabetes get the pneumonia inoculation. Most people need only one pneumonia vaccine injection for a lifetime of prevention. Individuals under the age of 65 with a chronic illness or weakened immune system—including diabetes—may need an additional injection five to 10 years after their initial one.³

The pneumonia vaccine could prevent the occurrence of some of the most serious strains of pneumonias and even death. And because the pneumonia injection has no live bacteria, there is no chance of developing pneumonia as a result of the inoculation.⁴ Pneumonia and influenza injections are covered by Medicare Part B and other health plans.

References

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. What You Should Know for the 2014 – 2015 Influenza Season. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season-2014-2015>. Accessed September 15, 2014.
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- 3 QualityHealth. Pneumonia and Diabetes. <http://www.qualityhealth.com/diabetes-articles/pneumonia-diabetes>. Accessed September 15, 2014
- 4 eMedicineHealth. ImmunizationSchedule, Adults. http://www.emedicinehealth.com/immunization_schedule_adults/page3_em.htm. Accessed September 25, 2014.