



**If your patients are suffering from Diabetes, Asthma or are aged  $\geq$  65 years, they may be at high risk of Flu.**

Influenza or flu <sup>2</sup> is a viral infection whose symptoms include mild fever and headache. But we cannot ignore the possible long-term effects and complications of influenza.

As we all know, the flu spreads quickly and affects the respiratory system - nose, throat, and lungs. There are other effects that can be experienced within the body as well.

Flu is more daunting for people with chronic respiratory diseases (CRDs), diabetes, and senior citizens. <sup>2</sup>

## **If your patient's are suffering from Chronic Respiratory Disease**

Chronic respiratory diseases (CRDs) <sup>3</sup> affect the airways as well as the other structures of the lungs. Asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pulmonary hypertension, and occupational lung diseases are some of the common CRDs. For individuals with CRDs, flu can complicate their existing condition.

Therefore, it is advisable for patients with asthma or other chronic respiratory diseases to get an influenza vaccination.

## **If your patient's have Diabetes**

Diabetic patients (type 1, type2, or gestational) <sup>4</sup> are at higher risk of being infected by influenza virus, which may cause more complications leading to hospitalizations and deaths. Some of the common flu-related complications include bronchitis, pneumonia, sinus infections, and ear infections.

Flu can worsen diabetes and weaken the immune system. Therefore, diabetic patients are advised to be vaccinated against flu.

## **If your patient's age is 65 years and above**

Citizens 65 years of age and above are at greater risk of developing severe complications caused by Influenza. A postulated reason for this is the changes that take place in the immune system associated with age. <sup>7</sup>

The risk of flu-related complications, pneumonia, and hospitalization is particularly high for people 65 and older. The risk of heart attack increases by 3-5 times and stroke by 2-3 times and these risks can occur within the first two weeks of infection for individuals over 65. <sup>8</sup> The risk can continue to be elevated for several months. Hence, people 65 years or older are at a six-times higher risk of dying from flu and related complications. <sup>5</sup>

Vaccination plays an important role when it comes to avoiding influenza. But there are a few additional simple steps that can help your patients it's prevention. <sup>6</sup>

- Washing hands at regular intervals, and before consuming food. It is recommended that you wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water, especially after coughing or sneezing. In case one is outdoors and don't have access to water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth, especially in public places.
- Maintain a proper distance from people who are infected.
- Wear a mask when stepping out of the house.

Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)<sup>9</sup>:

All persons aged  $\geq 6$  months who do not have contraindications should be vaccinated annually. However, vaccination to prevent influenza is particularly important for persons who are at increased risk for severe illness and complications from influenza and for influenza-related outpatient, emergency department, or hospital visits.<sup>1</sup>

- All children aged 6 through 59 months
- All persons aged  $\geq 50$  years
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (excluding isolated hypertension), renal, hepatic, neurologic, hematologic, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus)

In summary, all At-risk populations, especially the elderly or suffering from COPD, Asthma and Diabetes must consider flu vaccination every year to prevent flu disease and related complications.

**Reference :** 1. <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/vaccines-and-immunization-what-is-vaccination>

2. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm>

3. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/chronic-respiratory-diseases#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/chronic-respiratory-diseases#tab=tab_1)

4. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/diabetes.htm>

5. <https://www.nfid.org/infectious-diseases/flu-in-adults-age-65-years-and-older-what-are-the-risks/>

6. <https://www.aafa.org/asthma/asthma-triggers/other-health-conditions/respiratory-infections/flu-influenza.aspx>

7. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-wer9719>

8. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/heart-health-and-aging>

9. Grohskopf LA, Alyanak E, Ferdinands JM, et al. Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, United States, 2021–22 Influenza Season. *MMWR Recomm Rep* 2021;70(No. RR-5):1–28. DOI: