

October Healthy Conversations

Aches, fever, chills — oh my!

6 reasons the flu shot is more important than you may think

As the leaves change, the temperature drops and the pumpkin spice drinks return, it becomes clear that summer is at an end. And while the fall is known for these lovely signs of the season, it also brings an unwanted visitor—the flu.

Many of us have suffered from nasty flu symptoms: miserable days spent curled up on the couch with a high fever, aches, pains and chills. And, on top of the symptoms, there are the lost vacation days. There are much more serious consequences, yearly more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and some even pass away from the flu.

To fight off the flu, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends everyone who is six months and older get their flu shot before the illness begins infecting those around them. This is the single best way to prevent infection and when you protect yourself, you protect thousands of people at a higher risk of developing serious complications from the virus.

Here are our top-six reasons why you should get your flu shot today:

1. **It's the number one way to prevent the flu.** The sooner you get it, the more effective it will be.
2. **Protects your friends, family and coworkers.** Even if you don't show any flu-like symptoms, you can still infect others with the virus.
3. **Save your sick days.** Don't waste precious vacation days — get the flu shot instead!
4. **The flu shot is safe.** The flu vaccine contains an inactivated form of the virus, or no virus at all, so it can't give you the flu.
5. **Protect pregnant women.** Getting the flu shot protects women during and after their pregnancy. It also protects the baby months after birth.
6. **Avoid unnecessary spending.** Reduce the risk of flu-related hospital or doctors' visits to avoid a copay or a hospital bill.

As you plan for your flu shot, remember that it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to start working within your body. So make sure you're vaccinating early and get your flu shot today!

To quickly locate a participating doctor or pharmacy, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield members can use the Find a Provider tool to determine which providers offering the flu shot are within their health plan network.