



What Everyone Should Know About the Flu and Flu Vaccine

What is the Flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by **influenza viruses**. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall. Due to nation wide flu shortages this might be impossible for some. Those people who should get a flu vaccination are:

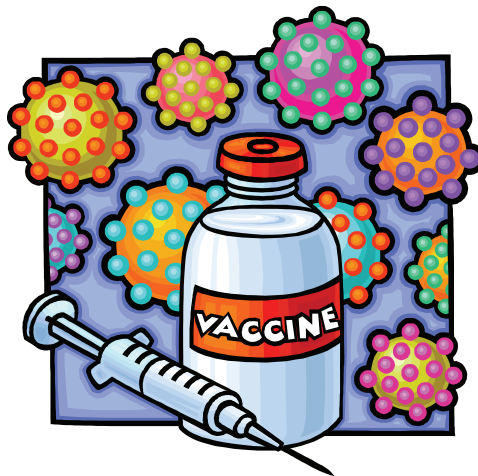
- Older People
- Young children
- People with certain health conditions, including pregnancy.

Symptoms & Complications of flu

Symptoms of the flu include:

- High fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat

- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Gastro intestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea which are usually more common with children than adults.



Certain good health habits can help prevent the flu if you are unable to get a flu shot this year.

Complications caused by the flu include:

- Bacterial pneumonia
- Dehydration
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions such as Congestive Heart Failure, asthma or diabetes.

The flu spreads by coughing or sneezing on or near other people. Occasionally a person may become infected by touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Adults with the flu begin infecting others 1 day **before** getting symptoms and up to 7 days **after** getting sick.

That means that you can **give someone the flu before you know you're sick as well as while you are sick.**

How to Reach us:

If you have questions, call Member Services 8am—4pm Mon.-Fri., at 898-5966

Good Health Habits

- *Avoid Close Contact—avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others.*
- *Stay home when you are sick—if possible stay home to help prevent others from catching your illness.*
- *Cover your nose and mouth—cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.*
- *Clean your hands—washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.*
- *Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth—Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.*

Who should get vaccinated

Who should get vaccinated with a flu shot:

- All children aged 6-23 months
- Adults aged 65 years and older
- Persons aged 2-64 years

with underlying chronic medical conditions

- All women who will be pregnant during the flu season
- Residents of Nursing Homes and long term care facilities

- Children aged 6 months—18 years on chronic aspirin therapy
- Out-of-home care givers and household contacts of children aged <6 months





Who Should not be vaccinated

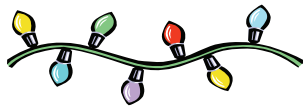
Because of a shortfall in flu shot production for this season, The Center For Disease Control is recommending that certain people be given priority for getting a flu shot. (see page one.) These are people who are high risk for serious complications or are in contact with people at high risk for serious flu complications. People who are not included in the list of priority groups are asked to

forgo or defer vaccination because of the vaccine supply situation.

These are also some people who should **not** get vaccinated:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past

- Children less than 6 months of age.
- People who are sick with a fever (These people can get vaccinated once their symptoms lessen.)



Flu Shot Alternative



The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each fall. Due to a Nation wide flu vaccine shortage you may need to take other precautions.

In addition to Good Health Habits (see page one) there is also an antiviral medication that may be used to prevent the Flu. Other than the flu shot there is also a Nasal spray flu

vaccine made with weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu, these are sometimes called LAIV—Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine.

This method of prevention is approved for healthy people 5 years to 49 years of age who are not pregnant. About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection

against influenza virus infection develop in the body. If a flu shot is unavailable to you through a clinic or your Primary Care Physician you can always ask if a Nasal Spray is a good alternative to a flu shot.



Consumer Advisory Board Meeting

It's that time of year again when Gold Choice clients get to talk about their Medicaid and Gold Choice. We will be having our annual Consumer Advisory Board Meeting in January 2005 at our Administrative Offices here at Gold Choice. We will have a guest speaker and then an open forum for questions. Please call

Deanna Bermingham at 898-5862

For details and to reserve your spot now.

Are you up to date?

If you would like an updated Provider Directory give Member Services a call and we'll be happy to send you one! 898-5966 or 888-419-1722





Women's Health: Mammograms and what you need to know

Due to winning a Koman Foundation Grant to study breast cancer, Gold Choice has taken an active interest in making sure our female members get a mammogram.

For detecting breast cancer in its earliest stages, getting mammogram is the single most effective method of all. Mammograms are vital because they can locate a lump too small to be found during a self exam.

Mammography is a simple breast X-ray that allows your doctor to see the internal structures of your breast. Screening mammography can uncover unexpected

problems in women with no other symptoms. If you have a family history of breast cancer (Mother, sister or daughter) your doctor may recommend the use of mammograms earlier than usual. There is also a risk if you have never been pregnant or had your first child after 30, began menstruating early or had a late menopause.

Some Mammogram sites available to Gold Choice/Medicaid recipients are:

- Kaleida Health Niagara Family Health Center 300 Niagara St. 859-4100

- Kaleida Health Women and Children's Hospital
219 Bryant St. 878-7000
- Sheehan Memorial Hospital
425 Michigan Ave. 848-2000.
- Windsong Radiology 55 Spindrift Dr. Williamsville. 631-2500

Remember to get a referral from your PCP before you go to your appointment. If you have any questions do not hesitate to call Member Services, 898-5966.



Know your benefits

The most satisfied Gold Choice members are those who know how to get the most from their Gold Choice Benefits. Talking to your Primary Care Physician about your care is key to making the most of your Gold Choice benefits.

Your doctor will help you with your treatment choices and give you a referral to see a specialist if you need one. Without a referral many specialist such as OB/

Once you have a referral make sure the specialist you are seeing takes your Medicaid.

GYN doctors will refuse your visit. This includes doctors you may have been seeing before you were a member of Gold Choice.

It is very important to have a referral in place before you go see a specialist and to verify that they accept your Medicaid. If you do not have one it could result in delays of treatment or refusal to treat you.

For more information about your specialty referral or a copy of the Gold Choice Handbook, please call Member Services at 898-5966 or toll free at 1-888-419-1722.

Remember, know your benefits and you will have a better understanding of your Primary Care.



Helpful Tips to Help You Quit Smoking



Smoking Cessation is a journey. Take it one day at a time, and you'll find that a difficult task becomes an enjoyable challenge.

- Don't Neglect Yourself: Eat a well balanced diet, Get more rest, drink water, Exercise daily, Take a daily multi vitamin.
- Don't believe that you can have "just one". Smoke one cigarette and you

run a very high risk of being back to a pack a day quicker that you can imagine. If you recognize thoughts of smoking cropping up, it's time to renew your resolve.

- Don't forget: You quit smoking for a reason, probably several. Don't let time and distance from smoking cloud your thinking. Review your reasons often.

Think about all of the positive changes you are creating in your life. Successful long-term cessation always starts in the mind. Focus on your purpose and develop an attitude of gratitude. You can't do a thing about yesterday or tomorrow but you sure can control today. Good Luck! We know you can do it!



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Mailing Address Line 2
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Mailing Address Line 4
Mailing Address Line 5



Gold Choice

Your Health Your Choice Gold Choice

Here at Gold Choice we are taking every step we can to make sure you get the best medical treatment possible from your Primary

Care Physician

That is why we need you to let us know if you ever have any questions or concerns regarding your primary care or Medicaid.

We need you to tell us if you have trouble getting treatment or if you don't

have an updated Gold Choice card or a Member Handbook. We need you to let us know when you move or change your doctor.

It is very important to us to hear from you so we can make sure your health care is available to you when and where you need it.

Please call us if you have a question or just need to make sure we have your new address.

Member Services is open Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm.

898-5966 or 888-419-1722

We want to hear from you and we look forward to speaking with you.

*Seasons Greetings from
Gold Choice.*