



Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association

THERE TO CARE: INVESTING IN A HEALTHY ARIZONA

What are YOU Doing About the FLU? *Your patients are going to ask.*

As a healthcare professional, you hardly need to be reminded that flu season is here. But here's something you may not know about who is carrying the flu. According to a report by the National Foundation of Infectious Diseases (NFID), *healthcare workers are frequently implicated as the source of the flu in healthcare settings.*

Because the flu virus is so highly contagious, you can unknowingly transmit it to patients in your care. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), this situation is particularly troubling for the many patients who are at high risk for influenza-related complications.

The CDC advises that the single best way to protect yourself against the flu is to get vaccinated each year. Naturally, protecting yourself from the flu will help prevent you from spreading it to your patients and loved ones. Yet the CDC reports a startling statistic: **An average of 64 percent of healthcare workers do not receive the flu vaccine each year.**

A study by the NFID identified five reasons that healthcare workers commonly give for not receiving the flu vaccine:

1. "I'm worried about the vaccine's side effects and safety and that it might give me the flu."
2. "I don't think I'm at risk for getting the flu."
3. "It's just not convenient for me to get a flu shot."
4. "I don't know the best way to avoid getting the flu."
5. "I hate needles."

Do you see your own reason on this list? First, you *can't* get the flu by receiving a flu shot. That is simply a myth. Flu shots contain an inactive virus that cannot cause the disease. The nasal-spray flu vaccine contains a weakened virus that also is incapable of causing the flu.

If you don't think you'll get the flu, think again. An estimated 25-50 million people contract it each year. They probably didn't think they would get the flu, either. If you think it's inconvenient to get a flu shot, consider how inconvenient it will be to miss several days of work. And if you don't like needles, that's OK. If you're 49 years of age or younger and not pregnant, you may receive the nasal spray flu vaccine.

Failing to protect yourself from the flu can put your patients at risk. That's why The Arizona Partnership for Immunization (TAPI) has sponsored a campaign to encourage patients to ask their healthcare providers if they've been vaccinated against the flu. When they do, will you have the right answer?

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