

Insights from Americans 65+ on Influenza and Prevention

Influenza can be severe and even life-threatening for older adults due to their weakened immune systems, and is especially dangerous for people with chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes.^{1,2,3} A recent survey – conducted in support of the Flu + You campaign educating older adults and those who care for them about the seriousness of the flu and the importance of prevention – found that many adults 65 years of age and older underestimate the seriousness of the flu and are largely unaware of their vaccine options.^{4,5}

Flu Hits Older Adults the Hardest, Yet Many Underestimate the Seriousness of the Flu

- The 2014-2015 flu season recorded the highest hospitalization rates among people 65 years of age and older in recent history.⁶
- **82%** are not extremely confident in their knowledge of the age-related decline of the immune system as it relates to the flu.⁵
- **Only 13%** of seniors are extremely confident in their knowledge of possible flu complications.⁵

This Is Especially True for Adults with Chronic Conditions, Yet Many Seniors Are Unaware of the Link Between the Flu and Chronic Conditions

- **Up to 80%** of adults hospitalized from flu complications in past flu seasons had a chronic health condition.⁷
 - **About one third** of people 65 years of age and older are unaware that someone with chronic conditions like heart disease or diabetes would be at risk for complications from the flu.⁵

Many Older Adults Get Vaccinated Against the Flu Every Year and Follow Their Health Care Professionals' Recommendations

- **71%** of older adults reported getting an annual flu shot to help maintain their health.⁵
- Health care professionals influence their patients' decisions related to flu vaccination.⁵
 - **62%** got a flu shot in the past because their physician recommended it.⁵
 - **57%** are more likely to get a flu shot if their doctor recommended it because of their age.⁵
 - **41%** got the type of flu shot they did because it was recommended by their physician.⁵

However, Many Seniors Are Unaware of Their Flu Vaccine Options

- **65%** think most flu shots are appropriate for all age groups.⁵
- **50%** are not confident in their knowledge of different types of flu shots.⁵

Further Education and Resources Are Needed When It Comes to the Flu

- **Only 8%** of survey respondents are concerned about getting the flu despite seniors' high hospitalization rates.^{5,8}
 - This highlights the need for further education about the seriousness of the flu.
- **88%** of older adults take a proactive approach to their health; however, about as many are not confident in their knowledge of the flu and where to get flu information.⁵
 - **82%** are not extremely confident in their knowledge of resources for information about the flu.⁵

Visit NCOA.org/Flu to learn more about the flu and your vaccine options.

The survey was conducted in April 2015 by Kelton Global on behalf of the National Council on Aging in collaboration with Sanofi Pasteur to uncover what older adults know of the flu and flu prevention. The survey included 1,065 U.S. adults 65 years of age and older (596 females and 469 males).

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Fluzone High-Dose Seasonal Influenza Vaccine. http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa_fluzone.htm. Accessed March 26, 2015.

² CDC. Seasonal Influenza: Flu Basics. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/index.htm>. Accessed March 26, 2015.

³ CDC. People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications. http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm. Accessed March 26, 2015.

⁴ CDC. What You Should Know and Do This Flu Season If You Are 65 Years and Older <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/65over.htm>. Accessed on March 26, 2015.

⁵ Kelton Global. National Council on Aging Survey in Collaboration with Sanofi Pasteur.

⁶ CDC. Situation Update: Summary of Weekly FluView. Published April 24, 2015. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/summary.htm>. Accessed April 28, 2015

⁷ CDC. U.S. Flu Season Off To Early Start, CDC Urges Vaccination. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/early-season-nivw.htm>. Accessed on December 4, 2014.

⁸ CDC. Situation Update: Summary of Weekly FluView. Published April 24, 2015. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/summary.htm>. Accessed April 28, 2015