



Did You Know!

The type of diabetes that is most common in the elderly is type 2 diabetes. By 2020, an estimated 20% of the US population will be over 65 years old. Currently, approximately 11% of persons over age 65 and nearly 40% of those over age 80 have diabetes. Since the incidence and prevalence of diabetes are increasing at alarming rates, diabetes educators can anticipate an epidemic of diabetes in geriatric populations.

Hypoglycemia is the most serious acute complication seen in the elderly who are treated with insulin secretagogues or insulin. Older persons have little glucagon response to hypoglycemia and decreased awareness of the early autonomic symptoms. Their major symptoms are neuroglycopenic, which often are confusion and altered psychomotor performance; these symptoms, in turn impair their ability to treat hypoglycemia appropriately.

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HYPOGLYCEMIA = Glutose 15

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Flu Shots Save Lives!

Ann Constance, Director • Diabetes Outreach Network
Marquette, Michigan

What do the Pope, Luciano Pavarotti and Jennifer Capriatti have in common?...They all missed important engagements because they had the flu:

- The Pope canceled a Christmas address at the Vatican due to the flu.
- Luciano Pavarotti missed an appearance at the New York Metropolitan Opera because he had the flu.
- Jennifer Capriatti did not compete in one of the Women's Tennis Association championshipsshe was in bed with the flu.

Healthy people benefit from getting a flu shot.

We know that people over the age of 65 should get a flu shot, but healthy adults can also benefit from getting an annual flu shot. (This year, routine vaccinations are recommended for all people over the age of 50.) Healthy working people who got a flu shot (October 1995, New England Journal of Medicine) stayed much healthier than healthy people who did not get a flu shot:

- 25% less upper respiratory illness (URI)
- 44% fewer visits to the doctor for URI
- 43% fewer sick days related to URI

For people with diabetes, a flu shot can be a lifesaver.

A flu shot can help healthy people stay healthy, but the benefits of a flu shot are even greater for people who have diabetes. People with diabetes don't just miss out on some wintertime and holiday fun when they get the flu, they are 6 times more likely to end up in the hospital, and the number of people with diabetes who die during flu epidemics increases 5 to 15% - that is 3 times higher than the death rate for people who do not have diabetes!

Pneumonia shots are important for people with diabetes also.

Pneumonia is an even bigger problem than the flu. About 10,000 people die from pneumonia complications and approximately 125,000 adults are hospitalized with pneumococcal pneumonia every year. People with diabetes are more likely to be sicker longer, end up in the hospital or die if they get pneumonia. Yet only about 1/3 of the people with diabetes have had a pneumococcal vaccination.

A person cannot get the flu or pneumonia from the shots.

Both of the shots contain dead viruses. A person may get soreness or redness where the shot was given, but that goes away quickly. Others get a slight fever, sore muscles or feel tired for a couple of days. However, the pain of the flu or pneumonia is much worse and goes on for days; a person will not even enjoy being a couch potato!!

A flu shot every fall and a one time pneumonia shot is recommended for people with diabetes.

The flu shot should be given every October or November, before the flu season hits, while the pneumonia shot can be given any time during the year. Both shots can also be safely given at the same time. Most people only need one pneumonia shot. If a person got a pneumonia shot more than 5 years ago and was under the age of 65, a one time revaccination is recommended. Certain other conditions such as chronic renal failure, people with no spleen or those who are immunosuppressed may need additional pneumococcal vaccinations. The flu and pneumonia shots are



Mark Your Calendar!

Upcoming Meetings

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Regional Postgraduate Course

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American Diabetes Association

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Did You Know!

◆ Type 1 diabetes accounts for 5% to 10% of all diabetes cases. Nearly 30,000 cases are diagnosed each year. Between 300,000 to 500,000 people suffer from Type 1 diabetes.

◆ The mean diagnosis age for Type 1 diabetes is 16.2 years.

◆ Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90% to 95% of all diagnosed diabetes cases in the United States. The median age of diagnosis is 51.

Source: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Practical Information for Today's Pharmacist. *Pharmacy Times*, July 2000.



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for anyone over the age of 2 who has diabetes, another serious chronic disease or is interested in staying healthy.

Most people can safely get the flu shot.

There are a few people who should not get a flu shot. People should check with their doctor before getting a flu shot if:

- They are allergic to eggs (the flu vaccine is made from eggs).
- They have had a serious reaction to a flu shot before.
- They are allergic to thimerosal, which is one of the ingredients in contact lens solution.
- They developed Guillan-Barre Syndrome within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot.

If a person has an acute illness, the shot should be delayed until the person is feeling better.

Some people will still get the flu or pneumonia, even if they have had the vaccinations.

Getting the flu and pneumococcal vaccinations does not guarantee that a person will never get the flu or pneumonia. Some people will still get sick. However, they will generally be less ill and recover more quickly. Also, it takes about 2 weeks for the flu shot to protect a person. Occasionally a person will catch the flu before their shot starts to work; that is one reason why people should get their shot early, before the flu season starts.

The shots are free for people on Medicare Part B.

Medicare Part B covers annual flu shots and a pneumococcal vaccination. Others may be eligible for free or low cost shots through their private health insurance. Some employers also offer flu shots at the worksite each fall.

Diabetes Educators and family members can help protect people with diabetes from serious illness.

Anyone who is regularly around people with diabetes should consider getting a flu shot to help the person with diabetes stay healthy. Since the flu shot is not 100% effective, some people with diabetes will still catch the flu. If the people around them are protected, people with diabetes have a better chance to remain flu free!

What else can Diabetes Educators do to help people with diabetes avoid the flu and pneumonia?

- Recommend flu and pneumonia shots to all patients you see this fall.
- Help patients get reimbursement for the vaccinations.
- Discuss how safe and effective flu and pneumonia shots are and why it is so important for people with diabetes to get vaccinated.
- Institute a system to remind all people with diabetes to get the flu shot each fall.

Special Note: Shortages and delays possible.

We may experience shortages and a delay in getting the flu vaccine this year (2000-01). According to the CDC and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP):

- Flu campaigns should be delayed until early to mid-November
- High risk persons should still be vaccinated at physician and clinic visits. **All** persons with diabetes fall into the high risk category.
- In mid-November, more routine vaccinations can begin, based on the amount of serum available.

For more information about flu and pneumonia shots, call the CDC National Immunization Information Hotline at 1-800-232-2522 (English) or 1-800-232-0233 (Spanish) or visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) web site at www.cdc.gov/nip.

References:

- ◆ BCBC and American Lung Association. *Flu stop at work*, 1996.
- ◆ CDC Prevention and control of influenza: recommendations of ACIP. *MMWR* 49:3, 2000.
- ◆ Update Influenza activity - U.S. and worldwide 1999 - 2000 season and composition of the 2000-01 influenza vaccine. *MMWR*, 49:375-381, 2000.
- ◆ Vaccine information. www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluivirus.htm. July 20, 2000.

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