**Medicare Outreach Idea of the Month**

**Flu Season--**

**October 2020**

Getting the flu vaccine may be more important than ever this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to reducing the risk of flu illness, hospitalization and death, it can also reduce the strain on the healthcare system, keeping hospital beds and other resources available for COVID-19 patients.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Flu vaccination is especially important for people 65 years and older because they are at [high risk](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm) of developing serious complications from flu.

Educate Medicare beneficiaries in your community about the importance of flu shots with the article below.

Re-word the email message below from CMS. Provide resources for EBS outreach and then include the article..

encourage people with Medicare or other CMS health care programs to get their flu shot. This year, CMS is taking additional actions to protect the health of the nation’s seniors from the flu and its associated health complications. This is through a

robust campaign aimed at people with Medicare, with a special focus on beneficiaries who experience health disparities. CMS encourages national and community partners to use CMS materials to educate people about the importance of flu vaccination. According to the CDC, a flu shot has many important benefits, including reducing the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, death. This is while reducing strain on America’s healthcare system, keeping hospital beds and other medical resources available for COVID-19 patients.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there's no evidence that a flu vaccination increases your risk of getting sick from a coronavirus, like the one that causes COVID-19. The [CDC recommends](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fclick.icptrack.com%2Ficp%2Frelay.php%3Fr%3D64548266%26msgid%3D525345%26act%3D1PTN%26c%3D1185304%26destination%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww.cdc.gov%252Fflu%252Fseason%252Ffaq-flu-season-2020-2021.htm%26cf%3D6316%26v%3D7b2bdc7abf51b55a890a79ddce195439084f28cb99f9c7066d536cd042f1fe7c&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cbf0a97b08a2842fe42d908d85bceea9e%7C8e087664409d4c4ca6b47aa01020d6ea%7C0%7C1%7C637360291562090456&sdata=H0RwkN8mnU1TV9USuKg%2F0MN1iXe8mgRBQtPdQ%2FxV4nU%3D&reserved=0) getting vaccinated in September or October, but a flu shot anytime during the flu season can help protect you. When going to get a flu shot, CMS recommends following [CDC recommendations for running essential errands](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fclick.icptrack.com%2Ficp%2Frelay.php%3Fr%3D64548266%26msgid%3D525345%26act%3D1PTN%26c%3D1185304%26destination%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww.cdc.gov%252Fcoronavirus%252F2019-ncov%252Fdaily-life-coping%252Fessential-goods-services.html%26cf%3D6316%26v%3Ddf36e2d8d739b905b237e803913708db9428ae65de17054af5ba5ca691f60c95&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cbf0a97b08a2842fe42d908d85bceea9e%7C8e087664409d4c4ca6b47aa01020d6ea%7C0%7C1%7C637360291562090456&sdata=dbp0RgA9Zzw4xnXd%2FzZHrfJJI5C3bKubTMu%2FlkKw4sg%3D&reserved=0). CMS encourages people to ask their family doctors, pharmacists, or health departments if they are following CDC's vaccination guidance. Any vaccination location following CDC's guidance should be a safe place to receive a flu vaccine. [Medicare Part B covers one flu shot per flu season](https://nam02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fclick.icptrack.com%2Ficp%2Frelay.php%3Fr%3D64548266%26msgid%3D525345%26act%3D1PTN%26c%3D1185304%26destination%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fwww.medicare.gov%252Fcoverage%252Fflu-shots%26cf%3D6316%26v%3D942203c4454b4886cc2e00bdec5a9ae60a7e06c96ebb8f525dbed96a1d5693ed&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cbf0a97b08a2842fe42d908d85bceea9e%7C8e087664409d4c4ca6b47aa01020d6ea%7C0%7C1%7C637360291562100450&sdata=HzhaglGNxo0w4PKCJIv0yE7cPUw84FU38C6cIVaxVzw%3D&reserved=0). Beneficiaries pay nothing for a flu shot if their doctor or other qualified healthcare provider accepts Medicare payment for giving the shot.

[**https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm**](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm)

It has been recognized for many years that people 65 years and older are at high risk of developing serious [complications from flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm) compared with young, healthy adults. This risk is due in part to changes in immune defenses with increasing age. While flu seasons vary in severity, during most seasons, people 65 years and older bear the greatest burden of severe flu disease. In recent years, for example, [it’s estimated](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/burden/past-seasons.html) that between 70 percent and 85 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older, and between 50 percent and 70 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people in this age group.

Flu vaccination is especially important for people 65 years and older because they are at [high risk](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm) of developing serious complications from flu. Flu vaccines are updated each season as needed to keep up with changing viruses. Also, immunity wanes over a year so annual vaccination is needed to ensure the best possible protection against flu. A flu vaccine protects against the flu viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. (See [Vaccine Virus Selection](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/vaccine-selection.htm) for this season’s exact vaccine composition.) Flu vaccines for 2020-2021 have been updated from last season’s vaccine to better match circulating viruses. Immunity from vaccination fully sets in after about two weeks.

n addition to getting a flu shot, people 65 years and older should take the same [everyday preventive actions](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/actions-prevent-flu.htm) CDC recommends for everyone, including avoiding people who are sick, covering coughs, and washing hands often.

**To view all the GWAAR Medicare Outreach and Assistance Resources, follow the link to our webpage:**

<https://gwaar.org/medicare-outreach-and-assistance-resources>

By the GWAAR Medicare Outreach Team