



North Carolinians Urged To Get Flu Shots Following Record-Breaking Flu Season

(NAPSA)—The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that can develop into mild to severe illnesses or even death—yet too many people don't realize how serious it can be.

Flu Facts

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza can send more than 700,000 people to the hospital each year.

Flu season generally starts as early as October and can run through May. Flu activity most commonly peaks in the United States between December and February. The 2017–18 flu season was one of the worst in more than a decade, resulting in a “high-severity” classification that saw 19 consecutive weeks of record-breaking flu hospitalizations nationwide.

In North Carolina alone, the number of flu-related deaths has jumped dramatically over the last three years. A total of 389 flu-related deaths were reported during the 2017–18 flu season, according to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. That was nearly double the number of deaths in 2016–17 and six times the number in 2015–16.

What Can Be Done

To avoid another hard-hitting season, health care professionals are encouraging people to get flu shots, though there is a concern that some groups might not take heed to the warning.

According to the CDC, African Americans nationwide were less likely to get a flu shot than white Americans due to concerns of side effects and efficacy. The study found that only 41 percent of African American adults received the flu shot compared with 47 percent of white adults.

A separate CDC report shows that the rate of Hispanic adults is even lower—just 39 percent.



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Doctor's Opinion

“It's clear that there is a need for health care professionals to make every effort to create environments where patients feel valued, believe they are getting access to the best treatment possible and have faith in the advice of their providers, especially when it comes to preventing the flu,” said Dr. Andrea Gelzer, senior vice president of medical affairs with AmeriHealth Caritas, a national leader in Medicaid managed care and other health care solutions for those most in need. “When groups of people choose to forgo getting vaccinated, there is an increased likelihood of health disparities that can cause serious and even fatal consequences.”

Dr. Gelzer believes health care professionals must help patients understand the benefits of getting a flu vaccination and work to ensure that any concerns and misperceptions are addressed. She stressed that having a primary care physician who can provide accurate and helpful information is essential.

Learn More

AmeriHealth Caritas is one of the nation's leaders in health care solutions for those most in need. For further information, visit www.amerihealthcaritas.com.