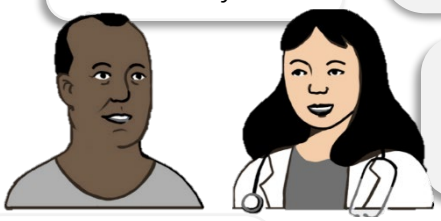
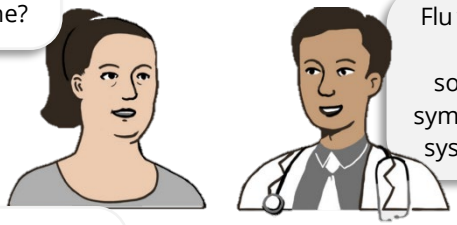
Flu Vaccination Decision-Making Guide:

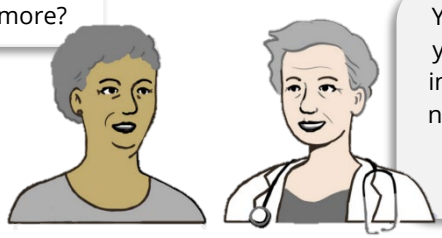
Shared Decision-Making Resource for Providers and Patients

In shared decision-making, healthcare professionals and patients work together to make the best possible healthcare decisions. These decisions consider fact-based information about available options, the clinician's knowledge and experience, and the patient's values, questions, and preferences.

STEPS OF SHARED DECISION MAKING	SAMPLE TALKING POINTS
S Seek Your Patient's Participation	Why do I need a flu vaccine? → Flu vaccines can keep you from getting sick with flu. We can discuss the options and choose one that is best for you. What have you heard about flu vaccines?
H Help Your Patient Explore and Compare Options	What does the flu have to do with my heart? → People with heart problems have higher risks if they get the flu including having a heart attack or stroke. How do you think the vaccine could help you?
A Assess Your Patient's Values and Preferences	Does it matter whether I get a regular or high-dose vaccine? → Certain flu vaccines, including high-dose flu vaccines, have been shown to work better in people 65 years and older.
R Reach A Decision with Your Patient	Can I get the flu from the vaccine? → Flu vaccines cannot cause the flu. They do sometimes cause mild symptoms as the immune system goes into action.
E Evaluate Your Patient's Decision	Can I get my flu vaccine with other vaccines? → Flu vaccines can be given at the same time as other vaccines. What other vaccines are you thinking about?
D Decide Which Resources Can Support Your Patient	Where can I learn more? → You can learn more by talking with your healthcare team, which could include your physician, pharmacist, nurse, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and dietitian. What questions do you have?







Find this resource and other guides at natforum.org/Flu_Guide and natforum.org/Shared_Decision.

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FOR PROVIDERS

Flu Vaccination Shared Decision-Making Guide

Step 1: Seek Your Patient's Participation

Many patients are not aware that they can and should participate in their healthcare decision-making. Communicate that a choice exists and invite your patient to participate in the process.

Summarize the health problem:

- "Flu vaccination is especially important for people with heart disease and people who have had a stroke because they are at higher risk for complications from flu. For these individuals, the risk of having a heart attack could be six times higher within a week of a confirmed flu infection."
- "People 65 years and older are at higher risk of developing serious complications from flu, such as worsening of chronic conditions, compared with young, healthy adults."

Invite your patient to be involved in decisions. Invite your patient to ask questions and discuss options with you.

- "I'd like to discuss flu vaccination options with you. We can then decide together which vaccine may be best for you."

Step 2: Help Your Patient Explore and Compare Options

Discussing options with your patient can help you build a trusting relationship.

Assess what your patient already knows about his or her options.

- "What are your thoughts about getting vaccinated for the flu?"

Explain each option clearly, using plain language. Avoid using technical or medical jargon. Point out when there are clear differences between specific options.

- "Flu shots are approved for everyone six months and older. Flu shots have a long, established safety record, including in people with heart disease and other chronic conditions."
- "People with heart disease who get a flu vaccine may have a lower risk of having a heart event."
- "The flu shots for older adults are either stronger or have an ingredient that strengthens the protection compared to the regular flu shot. This helps them work better in people 65 years and older."

Additional information is available at https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/flu-prevention.

Discuss the benefits, risks, and expected outcomes of each vaccine. Clearly communicate the benefits and risks associated with each vaccine, taking into account risk factors, offering official CDC-recommendations and guidance whenever possible.

- CDC immunization chart by condition: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/imz-schedules/adult-schedule-vaccines.html
- CDC recommendations for people 65 and over: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm

Communicate that there are choices and options:

- "There are different flu vaccines available, let's discuss which one is best for you."
- CDC 2024-2025 Influenza Recommendations https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/rr/rr7305a1.htm

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FOR PROVIDERS

Flu Vaccination Shared Decision-Making Guide (Cont'd.)

A

Step 3: Assess Your Patient's Values and Preferences

Encourage your patient to talk about what is important to him or her regarding the options. Use open-ended questions and listen actively to your patient.

- "What are your benefits of getting vaccinated for the flu?"
- "Which of the options seems to fit best with your personal health goals?"
- "What concerns you most about getting the flu shot?" or "What is holding you back from getting the flu shot today?"

Hear and acknowledge the values and preferences that matter to your patient. Paraphrase what you have heard. This assures your patient you are listening to his or her perspective.

R

Step 4: Reach a Decision With Your Patient

Ask if he or she is ready to make a decision or if they have any additional questions. Schedule another session if your patient requests more time to consider the options.

- Now that we had a chance to discuss your flu vaccine options, would you like to receive the vaccine today?" or "What questions do you have about the flu vaccine?"
- "I recommend that you get vaccinated as soon as possible, but the timing is up to you."
- "Would you like to schedule an appointment to come back for the vaccine another time?"

E

Step 5: Evaluate Your Patient's Decision

Make plans to review the decision in the future. Remind your patient that decisions may be reviewed in the future, and they may choose to get vaccinated when they are ready.

- "While you're thinking it over, it's important to know that in general, it takes about two weeks after vaccination to be considered protected from the flu."
- "While side effects to the vaccine could occur after vaccination, they should decrease after a few hours or days. If you experience any serious problems, contact me or another healthcare provider right away."

D

Decide Which Local Resources Can Support Your Patient

Share resources to support patients, including their cardiovascular care team (e.g. physician, pharmacist, nurse, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and dietitian). Give contact information for each resource.

References

- The SHARE Approach. Content last reviewed March 2023. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. https://www.ahrq.gov/health-literacy/professional-training/shared-decision/index.html
- Flu Symptoms & Complications. Content last reviewed October 3, 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. https://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/symptoms.htm
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- Get Your Flu Shot Today. American Heart Association. Accessed September 19, 2024. https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/flu-prevention
- Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices — United States, 2024–2025 Influenza Season. Accessed September 19, 2024. https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/rr/rr7305a1.htm

Shared Decision-Making Guide: Flu Vaccine Considerations

Patient and provider complete this guide together with a copy provided to the patient.

Vaccine received: _____

Visit date: _____

Patient risks:

☐ **Age 65 or older with or without chronic conditions**

☐ **Under age 65 with chronic conditions** such as heart disease (e.g., clogged arteries, heart failure, irregular heartbeat, or heart valve disorders) or a history of stroke

☐ **Under age 65 with no chronic conditions**

Notes

STOP. Provider and patient to discuss benefits, risks, and considerations

Age 65 or older with or without chronic conditions

The CDC recommends the use of enhanced flu vaccines (including high dose and recombinant) or adjuvanted flu vaccines over standard unadjuvanted flu vaccines for adults 65 years and older whenever possible.

Discuss benefits, risks, and considerations of

- High Dose Flu Vaccine
- Recombinant Flu Vaccine
- Adjuvanted Flu Vaccine

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/65over.htm

Under age 65 with chronic conditions

There are many flu vaccines approved for people that have a long, established safety record in people with heart disease. The CDC recommends that people with some chronic medical conditions should generally NOT get the Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV), given as a nasal spray.

Discuss benefits, risks, and considerations of

- Standard Unadjuvanted Flu Vaccine
- Cell-Based Flu Vaccine
- Recombinant Flu Vaccine

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/heartdisease.htm

Under age 65 with no chronic conditions

The CDC recommends use of any licensed, age-appropriate flu vaccine during the 2024-2025 flu season. There are different flu vaccine manufacturers and multiple flu vaccines that are licensed and recommended for use in the United States.

Discuss benefits, risks, and considerations of

- Standard Unadjuvanted Flu Vaccine
- Cell-Based Flu Vaccine
- Recombinant Flu Vaccine
- Live Attenuated Flu Vaccine

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/flushot.htm