Communicating with Patients about Flu Vaccination: Overcoming Barriers

When your patients say...

“I got vaccinated last year and got sick anyway.”

- Many other germs besides the flu cause symptoms similar to flu – you might have caught one of them.
- The Flu Vaccine takes 2 weeks to work; you may have been infected before you had immunity.

“The flu shot gave me the flu.”

- Flu shots are made with killed virus that cannot give you the flu. Sometimes your body’s immune response after vaccination can make you feel a little ill, and that’s normal—it just means your body’s defenses are working.

“Flu vaccine is not effective. Why bother?”

- Circulating viruses change every year. Last year, the flu vaccine was 36%-67% effective.
- Flu is very serious and can cause pneumonia, hospitalization and death.
- Even though the flu vaccine is not 100% effective, vaccination may make your illness milder.
- Two studies in 2017 showed flu vaccination
resulted in fewer complications like hospital or ICU stays for adults, and lowered the risk of death for children by over 50%.

“The flu is just like a bad cold—it’s not serious.”

- Flu is sometimes confused with a cold. Flu viruses are not the same as a cold. When a person catches the flu, they often have a fever and body aches; most also have to miss days of work or school. When complications set in, flu can be life-threatening. While babies, pregnant women, those with certain health conditions, and seniors are at highest risk, healthy people of any age can die from flu.

- The CDC estimates that more than 900,000 people were hospitalized and more than 80,000 people died from flu in the 2017-2018 season.

“I’m healthy and have never had the flu. I don’t need a flu shot.”

- Flu viruses mutate very fast from year to year. That means things can change. Every year, healthy people who have never caught the flu before suddenly get it.

Scarlet’s Story

Scarlet died at age 5 from flu complications. She did not get a flu vaccine. “The flu vaccination is not 100%. But I’d take 7%. I’d take 50%. I’d take 3%...The hardest part is knowing there are preventative measures I could have taken to possibly have saved her life.” Scarlet’s mom

www.shotbyshot.org