

FLU PREVENTION

Overview

Program Overview

The Nurse Aide Education Program

The mission of CareStar Learning is to provide quality continuing and in-service education for nursing assistants, home health aides, personal care aides, patient care technicians and other unlicensed healthcare providers.

This Course has been developed to meet the requirements of continuing and in-service education for Medicaid Service Providers, Home Health Agencies and Long-Term Care Facilities.

Course Overview

This course covers flu prevention. It identifies people who are at high risk for complications from the flu, vaccine side effects and preventive measures for caregivers and for individuals receiving care at home

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to give caregivers a basic understanding of flu infections and how to decrease the likelihood of infection through good health habits

Continuing and Inservice Education Credits (also referred to as CEU's)

1 Credit Hour equals 1 CEU or 1 Inservice hour.

Instructor Information

This course has been prepared by Registered Nurses.

Exam - Grading Scale

On all CareStar exams the passing score is 70 and 100 is the top score.

Introduction

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.

Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications
- About 36,000 people die from flu



Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious flu complications. If the person to whom you provide care fits into any of these categories, assist the person to consult with their physician about flu education and prevention.

Symptoms of the Flu

These are some symptoms of flu:



- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches

Stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea can also occur, but are more common in children than adults. Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. For their own well-being and the well being of the person to whom you are providing care, caregivers need to understand how to decrease the likelihood of flu infections.

Protect Yourself Against the Flu

The best way to protect yourself and others against the flu is to get vaccinated each fall before flu season begins. Caregivers and persons receiving care are encouraged to be vaccinated for the flu, as directed by their physician. There are two types of vaccines:



The "Flu Shot"- An inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age of age and older, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

The nasal-spray flu vaccine- A vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine"). LAIV is approved for use in healthy* people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.



About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies develop that protect against influenza virus infection. Flu vaccines will not protect against flu-like illnesses caused by non-flu viruses. October or November is the best time to get to get vaccinated, but you can still get vaccinated in December and later. Flu Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May.

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, certain people should get vaccinated each year either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for high risk persons. During flu seasons when vaccine supplies are limited or delayed, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) makes recommendations regarding priority groups for vaccination.

Priority Groups for Flu Vaccination:

Group 1- People at high risk for complications from the flu, including:

- Children aged six months until their fifth birthday
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term facilities

Group 2- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu (see above)
- Household contacts and caregivers of children under six months old (too young)
- Health care workers

Group 3- Anyone who wants to decrease their risk of influenza (however, some people should be vaccinated without first consulting a physician) including:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome within six weeks of a previous flu vaccine
- Children less than six months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved in this age group)
- People with a moderate or severe illness and fever (until symptoms lessen)

If you have questions about getting a flu vaccine, consult your health-care provider.

Good Health Habits for Prevention (CDC)

The Center for Disease Control emphasizes that the single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

1. **Avoid close contact:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
2. **Stay home when you are sick:** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
3. **Cover your mouth and nose:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
4. **Clean your hands:** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
5. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth:** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
6. **Practice other good health habits:** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.



Other Information

Every community has resources to assist with flu prevention. If you do not have a primary care physician, contact the local Department of Health or office of public health. Clinics that offer free or reduced cost flu vaccines will be listed.

There may be a shortage of flu vaccine, so be sure that those who are in the high risk categories (groups 1 & 2) have access to getting the vaccine. If you are a caregiver you may want to inquire about the pneumonia vaccine for yourself or for the person to whom you provide care.

Summary

Caregivers should know the signs and symptoms of flu and assist others in using good health practices to prevent flu infections. This includes good nutrition, exercise and proper rest. The Center for Disease Control recommends that people who are in high risk categories receive flu vaccine. Flu vaccine can often be obtained at reduced or no cost through public health clinics.

Flu Prevention Course Review

After reading this course you should have learned:

- **Basic information about the influenza virus**
- **General symptoms of the flu**
- **How to protect yourself from the flu**

