

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Urges Patients to Vaccinate

In the US nearly 42,000 adults and 300 children die annually from diseases that are preventable with vaccination. Due to these alarming statistics, pharmacists are poised to protect the public from the preventable diseases associated with the cold and flu season. The authority to administer vaccines is acquired by pharmacists upon completion of immunization training that meets the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is approved by the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy. This comprehensive training includes not only influenza, or flu vaccines, but also all currently approved vaccines. Louisiana pharmacists who become certified must obtain continuing education in immunizations every year to maintain their privileges.

Pharmacists who choose to become certified immunizers are qualified to address patient apprehensions associated with vaccination. Pharmacists are now an important provider of flu vaccines in Louisiana to anyone over 7 years old. The success of pharmacist immunizing initiatives convinced the Louisiana Legislature to allow pharmacists practicing in health care professional shortage areas to vaccinate adults against pneumonia, and zoster (Shingles) in addition to influenza. Many patients now also receive other vaccinations at the pharmacy with a prescription from their primary care provider.

The modern vaccine owes its inception to clinicians in the 18th century, who used scrapings of Cow Pox lesions to vaccinate against Small Pox. In our time Healthy People 2020 promotes vaccination as one of the most cost effective preventative services because of the low cost of vaccines compared to the number of lives and dollars saved.

Despite the success of vaccination programs there is still more to do. Many of the deaths caused by the flu or related illnesses could have been prevented simply through better access to vaccinations. Immunizing pharmacists at local community pharmacies are crucial to efforts aimed at providing this access.

The 2012 influenza vaccine contains components that provide immunity to 3 different types of flu causing viruses including H1N1, H3N2, and an influenza B strain. There are 2 formulations of influenza vaccine, trivalent inactivated virus (TIV) and live attenuated influenza virus (LAIV). TIV is made from viruses that have been inactivated. This season, a TIV intradermal injection is also available. LAIV utilizes a virus that has been weakened. The live-weakened virus may cause mild symptoms like sore throat or runny nose. It is available as a nasal spray for those patients with a deep fear of needles.

Anyone over the age of 6 months should receive the influenza vaccine. Pharmacists are a good source for information about other vaccines and when a child or an adult should have them. Patients sensitive to eggs should inquire if the vaccine could include trace amounts of egg byproducts. Patients allergic to eggs can often be vaccinated but should first discuss this with their primary care provider. There is no link between any vaccination and long term adverse reactions that lead to Autism or related conditions.

The decision whether or not to be vaccinated is a personal decision; the consequences of that choice have societal repercussions. Unvaccinated people not only place themselves at a higher risk but also place their loved ones and neighbors at higher risk for getting the flu and other diseases. Unvaccinated people, who are in contact with the elderly, newborns or patients with conditions that result in immune suppression, represent the community's greatest risk.

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at www.louisianapharmacists.com.

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