**Why talk about the flu shot?**

- Over 91,000 Americans a year die from heart attacks and strokes triggered by the flu.
- There is a surge in cardiovascular mortality each flu season during high flu activity.
- The American Heart Association (AHA) and The American College of Cardiology (ACC) recommend an annual flu vaccine in injection form for cardiovascular patients “with coronary and other atherosclerotic vascular disease”.
- The AHA and ACC equate “influenza vaccination with cholesterol screening, blood pressure, and other modifiable risk factors” as secondary prevention.
- Post-acute coronary syndrome patients who received flu vaccination saw a significant reduction in major adverse cardiac event—9.5 percent vs 19.3 percent in unvaccinated patients.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that less than half of Americans with high-risk cardiac disease receive the flu vaccine.

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**How can you improve flu vaccination rates in patients with cardiovascular disease?**

- Recommend a flu shot - studies have shown that a strong recommendation by providers increases flu vaccination rates.
- Have the vaccine readily available during cardiology and other clinic visits.
- Incorporate vaccinations as a routine part of patient care.
- Talk with your patients about flu and flu vaccine.
- Encourage your patients to learn more at the Veterans Health Library or on the VA flu website.

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**Lead by example – get your flu shot.**

Reduce your patients’ risk of death by heart attack and stroke by up to 50%.
Learn more:

Persons at High Risk for Flu Complications – Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines, Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices — United States, 2016–17 Influenza Season, Recommendations and Reports / August 26, 2016 / 65(5);1–54; www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/rr/rr6505a1.htm?s_cid=rr6505a1_w#persons_risk_medical_complications


Recommend, as appropriate, pneumococcal vaccine for chronic heart disease patients, including heart failure, and cardiomyopathies.