RESPIRATORY DISEASE and...

You, Respiratory Disease and THE FLU

Do you have a respiratory disease such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD, formerly known as emphysema) or asthma? If so, the flu is more dangerous for you.

Why?

- A respiratory disease can weaken your body's ability to fight off the flu.
- The flu can make respiratory disease worse.

To protect yourself from the flu (influenza), you need to get the flu shot, not the nasal-spray flu vaccine.

Is the flu a serious disease?

Yes. The seasonal or annual flu is a virus that affects the lungs, throat, nose, and other parts of the body. Unlike the common cold, the flu comes on suddenly, makes you very sick for a week or longer, and it can send you to the hospital.

When a sick person coughs or sneezes, tiny droplets fly through the air. You can get sick from the droplets if they land in your nose, eyes, or mouth. You can also get the flu by touching a surface like a table or a doorknob that has flu virus on it, then touching your mouth or nose.

You can get the flu from others even when they don't feel sick. Staying away from people who look sick is not enough to protect you.

Each year in the United States, over 23,600 people die from the flu.

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Why should I get the flu shot?

- To save your LIFE. Because you have a respiratory disease your risk of death or serious illness from the flu is higher than it is for most people.
- To save time and money. You will miss fewer days of work due to sickness.

The flu vaccine is quick, easy and safe protection.

Can the flu shot give me the flu?

No. This is not possible, because the shot is made with only dead flu virus.

Is the flu shot safe?

Yes. The flu shot is very safe; its benefits far outweigh any possible side effects. Some people may have redness and soreness where they received the shot, but other side effects are rare.

Do I need to get a flu shot every year?

Yes. The flu virus changes every year, so the flu shot must change too. Because you have a respiratory disease, you should be among the first to get your flu shot in the fall.

Should my family and friends get a shot, too?

Yes. Everyone can get the flu. When the people around you get the flu shot they not only protect themselves, they are less likely to spread the flu to you. Your family and friends may be able to get the nasal-spray flu vaccine. Nasal-spray vaccine is approved for people ages two through 49 who are not pregnant and who do not have certain health conditions. People considering the nasal-spray vaccine, should check with their doctor to see if it is right for them.

Should I get a pneumococcal (pneumonia) shot?

Yes. Just as you are at a higher risk for the flu, you are also at higher risk for pneumonia. Pneumonia is a serious complication of the flu and it can be life threatening. Unlike the flu shot, you will need to get the pneumococcal shot only once or twice in your lifetime.

How do I get the seasonal flu and pneumococcal (pneumonia) shots?

Talk to your doctor or contact your local health department.

For more information about the flu shot, visit:
http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/

Or, visit the New York State Department of Health's flu clinic locator during flu season.