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**Protect Your Patients against Complications from the Flu:
A Message to Nurses from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

DID YOU KNOW? Last flu season, 55% of high risk adults in Massachusetts did not receive flu vaccine. Nationally high risk adults were hospitalized for influenza at much higher rates. Flu season is fast approaching and your patients are at risk for complications from influenza. **Vaccination is the best way to protect your patients.**

Too many high risk adult patients are not being vaccinated against the flu. Studies have shown that a healthcare provider's recommendation is the most important determinant of whether or not a person gets vaccinated. And, offering the vaccine to your patients is even more effective than just recommending it. Nurses should consider every patient visit between now and March an opportunity to educate and encourage flu vaccination.

While all persons over 6 months of age should receive an annual flu vaccination, those at highest risk for serious complications from flu include those who have: asthma, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, immune suppression, metabolic disorders, renal disease and neurologic disease, or are obese or pregnant.

To purchase vaccine, go to www.preventinfluenza.org/ivats/ for a list of vaccine distributors, or call the manufacturers directly. The [Adult Vaccination Guide](#) is a complete tool kit to integrating immunization services into health care settings new to vaccination. **For advice** about how to order flu vaccine, please call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Vaccine Unit at 617-983-6820.

For other flu information, call the MDPH Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800 or go to the following sites: [CDC flu website](#) or [Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse](#).

DID YOU ALSO KNOW?

CDC recommends that all health care workers get an annual flu vaccine - however fewer than half report getting vaccinated. Health care workers have a special role in the fight against influenza. By getting vaccinated, you can help protect your family as well as your patients at work from getting sick. High rates of vaccination among nurses and health care workers have been linked to improved patient outcomes and reduced absenteeism and influenza among staff. Getting a yearly flu vaccine can help ensure your time off is spent doing what you want to do, not staying at home sick.

Imagine the impact that over 140,000 individual licensed as nurses in Massachusetts could make if they encouraged their patients, neighbors, friends and each other to obtain vaccination for influenza.