

# The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

[www.TheAllergyClinic.com](http://www.TheAllergyClinic.com)

Andrew C. Engler, M.D.

290 Baldwin Avenue, San Mateo, California 94401  
(650) 343-4597 FAX (650) 343-3402

Newsletter

[www.theallergyclinic.com](http://www.theallergyclinic.com)

September 2020

## Get your 2020 Flu Shot early this year

Getting your flu shot this year is one of the most important things you can do for your health and others'—especially in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

Even though typical flu season begins in October and peaks between December and February, the changes brought on by COVID-19 means it is time to start thinking about when, how and where you can get immunized. "People who can avoid the flu will help reduce the burden on a U.S. health care system already overwhelmed by COVID-19," said Mark Thompson, an epidemiologist in the Influenza Division at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Given the fact that the flu season in Northern California typically starts later here than in other parts of the country, according to infectious disease experts, the optimum timing for flu vaccines this year in the Bay Area would be late September or early October. It takes two weeks after your flu shot to achieve full immunity, so steer clear until then of anyone who has flu symptoms.

Influenza (flu) can be more serious for people with allergies and asthma, even if their asthma is mild or their symptoms are well-controlled by medication. This is because people with asthma often have swollen and sensitive airways and influenza can cause further inflammation of the airways and lungs. Influenza infection in the lungs can trigger asthma attacks and a worsening of asthma symptoms. It also can lead to pneumonia and other acute respiratory diseases, which in turn can lead to serious complications.

Flu shots (made with inactivated (killed) flu virus) are approved for use in people 6 months and older regardless of whether or not they have asthma or other health conditions. The flu shot has a long established safety record in people with asthma.

If you do get sick with flu symptoms, call your primary care doctor and take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them. Keep in mind that antivirals should

be taken with 48 hours of symptom onset or exposure for maximum benefit.

## Shingles and Pneumonia Vaccines

Several patients have recently been addressed by their local pharmacies to be vaccinated to shingles and pneumonia and while their intentions are good, these vaccinations should be administered following very specific criteria.

For the shingles vaccine (Shingrix), healthy adults 50 years and older should get two doses of Shingrix, separated by 2 to 6 months. Individuals should get Shingrix even if they have had shingles, received Zostavax or are uncertain if they have had chickenpox. If a patient has had shingles in the past, they can get Shingrix to help prevent future occurrences of the disease, but they should make sure that their symptoms associated with shingles have completely resolved. Studies show that more than 99% of Americans 40 years and older have had chickenpox, even if they don't remember having the disease.

There are two kinds of pneumococcal vaccines available in the United States, one of which is the Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine or PCV13 and the other, Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine or PPSV23. The CDC recommends PCV13 for all children younger than 2 years old and people 2 years or older with certain medical conditions. Adults 65 years or older also can discuss with their primary care physician when to get PCV13. The CDC recommends PPSV23 for all adults 65 years or older, but in some cases, this vaccination can be given at an earlier age, depending on other underlying medical conditions, including bronchial asthma and chronic sinusitis.

If you have any questions regarding you or your loved one receiving any of these vaccines, and how they may impact your allergies or asthma, please contact our office to schedule a telehealth visit with one of our allergy and asthma specialists.