

# You, Heart Disease and

# THE FLU

**Do you have heart (cardiovascular) disease?  
If so, the flu is more dangerous for you.**

## Why?

- ▶ Heart disease can make your body too weak to fight off the flu.
- ▶ The flu vaccine can help prevent heart attacks, strokes or other complications if you have heart disease.
- ▶ When you get the flu you are much more likely to have a heart attack than when you are healthy.
- ▶ The flu can make heart disease worse.

To protect yourself from the flu (influenza), you need to get the flu shot.

## 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.

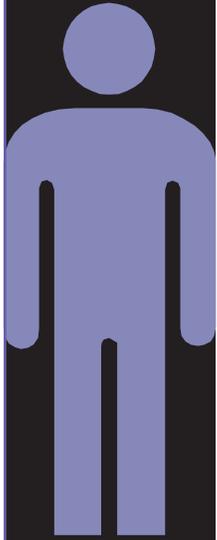
You can get the flu from others even when they don't feel sick. Staying away from people who look sick is not enough to protect you.

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

## Why should I get the flu shot?

- ▶ To save your LIFE. Because you have heart disease, your risk of death and 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 cardiovascular 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 protect themselves from flu and are also less likely to spread the disease to others. The flu shot is recommended for everyone six months and older, including pregnant women and people with certain chronic health conditions.

## 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 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:

[www.health.ny.gov/flu](http://www.health.ny.gov/flu)

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

