

## You, Smoking and

# THE FLU

**Do you smoke? If so, the flu (influenza) is more dangerous for you.**

### Why?

- ▶ You can catch the flu more easily than others.
- ▶ Smoking can weaken your body's ability to fight off the flu.
- ▶ Smoking can damage your lungs and cause Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). COPD includes emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and sometimes asthma. Getting the flu can make these conditions much worse.

To protect yourself from the flu, you need to get the 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, nearly 24,000 people die from the flu.

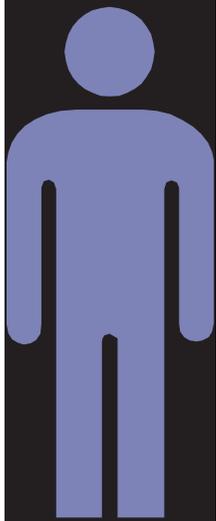
### Why should I get the flu vaccine?

- ▶ To save your LIFE. Because you smoke, 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 vaccine give me the flu?

No. It is not possible to get the flu from the flu vaccine. ....▶



## Is the flu vaccine safe?

Yes. The flu vaccine 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 vaccine every year?

Yes. The flu virus changes every year, so the flu vaccine must change too. Because you smoke, you should be among the first to get your flu vaccine in the fall.

## Should my family and friends get the vaccine, too?

Yes. Anyone can get the flu. When people around you get the flu shot they protect themselves from the flu and they are less likely to spread the disease. 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. There are two types of pneumococcal shots that protect against different types of diseases. You may need both vaccines at different times in your life.

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

Talk to your doctor or contact your local health department.

For more information about the flu vaccine, 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.

## Smoking is an Addiction

- ▶ Smoking is an addiction that hurts almost every organ of the body, causing many diseases. Within 20 minutes of smoking your last cigarette, your body begins a series of positive changes that continue for years.

## For help quitting

- ▶ Talk to your health care provider.
- ▶ Did you know? When your health care provider offers you medication and counseling, you double your chances of being smoke-free.
- ▶ You can also get more help by calling the **New York State Smokers' Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487)** or by visiting [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com). It's a free and confidential service to help you become smoke-free.