



Flu Vaccine Myths & Facts

Influenza (flu) is a serious and common disease, and the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent it. Still, some people may be unsure what to think of the flu shot. Here are some Myths and Facts you should know about the flu vaccine:

Fact: “The flu shot cannot cause the flu.”

The flu shot cannot cause the flu. Some people get a little soreness or swelling where they get the shot. It goes away in a day or two. Serious problems from the flu shot are very rare.

Myth: “Side effects of the flu vaccine are worse than the flu.”

The worst side effect you are likely to get from a flu shot is a sore arm. The risk of a rare allergic reaction is far less than the risk of severe complications from the flu.

Fact: “People can die from the flu.”

Influenza is a serious disease of the nose, throat, and lungs, and can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 114,000 people in the US are hospitalized and about 36,000 people die because of the flu.

Myth: “You must get a flu vaccine before December.”

Flu vaccine can be given before or during flu season. The best time to get vaccinated is October or November, but you can get vaccinated in Decem-

ber or later.

Fact: “Even if I get the flu vaccine, I can still get the flu.”

The vaccine usually protects most people from the flu. Occasionally a person who gets a flu vaccine can get the flu, but it will often be milder than without the vaccine.

Myth: “The flu shot is not safe.”

The United States government oversees the safety of all vaccines used in the US. New vaccines are licensed only after thorough tests have proven their effectiveness and safety.

If you have more questions, talk to your care team, or call the CDC Health Information Line: 1-800-232-4636.

For information on where to receive your flu shot this fall, call your Primary Care Team. ♦

Consumer story



Julia Chapman
 Senior Care Options

"I volunteer at the Greater Springfield Senior Services organization. Another volunteer there told us all about a new company that was offering a Senior Care Options program. It sounded much better than the health insurance I currently had, so I called Chris Ruge [NP at Community Healthcare Group at Brightwood] and he helped me through the enrollment process. My health care is much better now - I love having Rosemary [Dion, RN] to talk to. My doctor is very busy and so if I have a question she can help with, I call my nurse who can then talk to my doctor. Rosemary certainly gives me special care. My previous nurse, Alina Sibley was also wonderful - she helped me understand the ESİ [pharmacy management] process and she was very patient." ♦

"I think the Consumer Advisory meetings are useful because we learn from our presenters and from each other. It's almost like a support group."



Member Services Team

Have you ever called our Member Service Representatives and wondered what the face looks like behind that friendly and competent voice on the telephone? We would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you our Member Services team: Representatives, Leslie Alvarez, Maria Barbosa, Ewa Gorn, Claritza Peguero and Neusa Pina and Manager, Cheryl Snyder. Our Representatives come from diverse backgrounds and bring a

wealth of experience and skills to Commonwealth Care Alliance. Each of our team speaks at least one language other than English, which provides outstanding communication and service to our Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Polish, Cape Verdean Creole and Haitian Creole speaking members.

Cheryl Snyder speaks highly of the group, 'Everyone shows a level of commitment to the care of our members that is very impressive.' For Ewa Gorn, the best part of her job is just knowing members have received the

(L-R) Leslie Alvarez, Neusa Pina, Cheryl Snyder, Maria Barbosa, Ewa Gorn (Front) Claritza Peguero

care they need. "Members call and say thank you and God bless you for helping them. It's rewarding to know you've made a difference in someone's life."

Our newest Member Service Representative, Claritza Peguero says, "For me,

working with the team is an experience that will let me open many doors in the future. Giving outstanding service to our members and giving a smile everyday - it will be a wonderful experience." ♦

"It's rewarding to know you've made a difference in someone's life"

Consumer Advisory Meetings

Large numbers of Commonwealth Care Alliance members have been showing up at our recent Consumer Advisory meetings to have their voices heard. The meetings at the Brightwood Health Center in Springfield, MA are so popular that on July 30 this year, we held three Spanish meetings to hold the numbers of people that wanted to come.

One mission of the Consumer Advisory Meetings is to listen to our members and to ask them for ideas on how to improve our care for them. Almost all of the feedback has been positive which motivates us to keep up such a high level of care.

Another reason we hold the meetings is to tell our members about important medical advice, such as flu shots, emergency room use and nutrition. We also use the meetings to answer any questions our members have about their health care. The

“This program is wonderful and we want it to come to Holyoke because there are a lot of people interested. I am grateful that I feel better since I have joined this beautiful program. I came all the way from Holyoke [to attend the meeting].”
SCO member

Consumer Advisory Meetings are a great place to meet other SCO members and share experiences. It can be very comforting to learn there are others out there with similar challenges and concerns.

We are also looking for members willing to become advocates for the entire membership of our SCO program. These ‘leaders’ will speak on behalf of their peers at forums such as a Patient Care Assessment and Consumer Advisory Committee (PCACAC). ♦

“I am very happy with this program. I was in a deplorable condition and very sick; I thought I was going to die and that I wasn’t going to make my 70s. But I am now 73 years and I feel young because of this program, it has been a victory! When I call [Member Services] I feel the love and the happiness. God bless you all!” SCO member



Consumer Advisory Meetings are held in your communities.

Stay tuned for your invitation in the near future.



My doctor told me to
GET A FLU SHOT to protect
myself and my family —



SO I DID.

For more information, ask your healthcare provider
or call **800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)**
Website www.cdc.gov/flu



Visit the Commonwealth Care Alliance website for the latest in member information

www.commonwealthcare.org

