

To: MDwise Hoosier Alliance Providers

Subject: 'Tis the Season for Flu Vaccination Reminders and Open Clinics

From: MDwise Hoosier Alliance

Date: November 30, 2010

Encouraging your patients to get their influenza vaccine has the potential to not only protect them from unnecessary illness, it can also help your practice maintain a manageable patient load through the busy cold and flu season.

If you are conducting outreach to your patients to encourage them to get a flu vaccination, remember that all current MDwise Hoosier Alliance Hoosier Healthwise (HHW) members are covered for either the Trivalent Inactivated Influenza Vaccine (TIV) or the Live, Intranasal Influenza Vaccine (LAIV). MDwise Hoosier Alliance Healthy Indiana Plan (HIP) members are also covered.

This year's vaccine protects against three different influenza viruses – H₃N₂, Influenza B and H1N1. The CDC says everyone 6 months of age or older should be vaccinated for the flu each year. On September 15, 2010, the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) issued a letter to health-care providers stating that TIV is safe for pregnant women in any trimester. However, it's important to note that HHS advises against administering LAIV to pregnant women. HHS says either the shot or nasal spray version of the flu vaccine can be safely administered to your postpartum patients.

Only a few segments of the population should not receive a flu vaccine. People who have had a severe allergic reaction to chicken eggs or a past flu vaccination (including developing Guillian-Barré syndrome) and people who are running a fever should not be vaccinated.

Consider reminding your patients that the pneumonia vaccine is also an important preventative measure for high-risk children and the elderly, as well as for people with renal disease, sickle cell anemia or diabetes. The pneumonia vaccine is covered for MDwise Hoosier Alliance HHW members. It is also covered for MDwise Hoosier Alliance HIP members.

Because the flu season can last into February and March, depending on the particular community, the Centers for Disease Control recommend sustaining flu vaccination efforts well into the winter months. Taking time during your phone and in-person interactions to encourage your patients to get vaccinated can be effective.

Another way to encourage influenza vaccination among your patients is to hold one or more Flu Vaccination Days at your office. Patients can come in at a time during the day that's convenient for them, without making an appointment. The Indiana State Department of Health has a step-by-step guide to hosting a vaccination clinic. You can download the guide from our Web site, <http://www.hoosieralliance.org/provider/provcom/seasonal/index.aspx>.