Flu season is right around the corner, and this year’s may be unprecedented. Because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, health care experts are sounding the alarm on the importance of protecting against the flu.

When it comes to the flu, there’s no better way to defend yourself, your family, and your community than by making sure you receive a flu shot — and your flu shot is covered under your health plan at 100%. All it takes is a quick trip to the pharmacy.

The benefits of the flu shot

Each year, millions of people — around 8% of the U.S. population — become sick with the flu. The flu shot can help:

- **Keep you healthy.** The flu shot has helped prevent:
  - 4.4 million illnesses
  - 2.3 million medical visits
  - 58,000 hospitalizations
  - 3,500 deaths

- **Lessen the impact from COVID-19.** Becoming sick with the flu can leave you vulnerable to a more serious case of COVID-19, leading to a potential overburdening of national health care systems.

- **Prevent complications in people with chronic conditions.** The flu vaccine can reduce hospitalizations for people with diabetes and chronic lung conditions, and help lower the rate of cardiac events.

- **Reduce how sick you become.** A flu shot can help decrease your risk of becoming ill with the flu by as much as 60%, and can help reduce the severity of the virus if you do become ill.

- **Protect the people around you**, including those who are at a higher risk for illness, such as babies, young children, older adults, and those with chronic health conditions.

- **Prevention**. While having a flu shot is the best prevention against the flu, here are additional tips:
  - Clean shared surfaces. Wipe down items such as telephones, keyboards, steering wheels, and doorknobs often.
  - Avoid close contact with those who are sick. This will help to reduce the chance of becoming infected and sick.
  - Wash your hands often and direct your sneeze or cough to your upper sleeve.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

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Flu prevention may be more important than ever this year

Reduce your flu risk at no cost to you with a flu shot

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2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Key facts about influenza (flu) (September 13, 2019): cdc.gov/flu/about/keyfacts.htm.
3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Misconceptions about seasonal flu and flu vaccines (September 1, 2020): cdc.gov/flu/prevent/misconceptions.htm.

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