The Importance of Immunization: Flu and Shingles

Every year, millions of people come down with seasonal flu (influenza) or shingles (herpes zoster). These illnesses can be difficult to avoid, but getting your vaccinations is an important step. And with Medical Mutual, you have plenty of options for where you can go.

Essentially, vaccines are a weakened or dead form of a virus or bacteria. They allow your immune system to produce antibodies so your body is ready if you’re exposed to the actual disease.

Of course, vaccines aren’t a guarantee you won’t get sick. But they can’t make you sick, either. Some people experience minor side effects, but they usually don’t last long. Even if you do get sick, the symptoms usually aren’t as bad.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has useful guidelines for avoiding both the flu and shingles, including how often you should be vaccinated based on your age and overall health.

**Influenza (Seasonal Flu)**
The flu vaccine is either administered with a shot or a spray you inhale through your nose. Within two weeks, you develop antibodies for a specific strain of the virus. The flu is caused by influenza viruses A and B, but the strains change slightly every year. That’s why it’s important to get a shot every year. The CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months or older should get a flu shot.

**Shingles (Herpes Zoster)**
One dose of the shingles vaccine is recommended for all adults age 60 and older, according to the CDC. Those people who had chickenpox earlier in life are more likely to contract shingles, since both illnesses are caused by the same virus. And the risk goes up as you get older. Even if you already had shingles, the vaccine may help you avoid getting it again.

**Where to Go**
All across Ohio, Medical Mutual has partnered with pharmacies, grocery stores and other commercial retailers to make sure you have access to the vaccines you need each year.

Visit one of these convenient locations to get your vaccinations for the flu and shingles:

- CVS Pharmacy
- Discount Drug Mart
- Falcon Health Center
- Giant Eagle
- Marc’s
- Meijer
- Rite Aid
- Target