



The Flu and You: What to do if you have CKD

Flu season is coming, and patients with chronic kidney disease need to start preparing now. The flu virus (also known as influenza) is highly contagious and generally causes fever, fatigue, poor appetite, dehydration, and body aches. If it gets severe, it can lead to serious bacterial lung infections. Luckily, vaccination against seasonal flu is fairly effective at preventing serious illness.

In patients with chronic kidney disease, a serious influenza infection could hasten the loss of kidney function. This highlights why it is so important for patients with CKD to prepare for flu season and get vaccinated.

Here are some common sense strategies to help prepare for flu season:

- **If you have chronic kidney disease or a kidney transplant, you should be vaccinated against influenza every year.** Vaccine is now available through your primary care physician, kidney specialist, and at many drug stores. Immunization against influenza is fully covered by most medical insurance policies. *Patients with kidney transplants should only receive the injectable form of the vaccine.*
- **Get in the habit of washing your hands regularly throughout the day.** Hand sanitizer is also effective and especially useful while you are on the go.
- **If you start to feel sick and you think you may have the flu, stay home, stay well hydrated, and let your kidney specialist know how you are doing.** You may be instructed to hold some of your medicines, such as diuretics and some blood pressure medicines, depending on your symptoms. If you have fever, you should take Tylenol (acetaminophen). *Remember, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen, Aleve (naproxen), Advil, Motrin, BC Power, and Goody Powder can seriously harm your kidneys and should be avoided.*