

# 1 Out of 3 U.S. Adults Not Planning to Get Flu Shot This Year

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By:

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One out of three U.S. adults plan to skip their flu shot this year, according to an Opinion Research/Select Medical telephone poll. Against that backdrop, two top clinical leaders in long-term acute-care released a statement today reminding the American public that influenza season can be a deadly time for those suffering from a chronic lung disease such as asthma or COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). Such patients need to take extra precautions as they navigate the change in season, according to David Jarvis, MD, national medical director for Select Medical's 110 long-term acute care (LTAC) hospitals, and Lisa Snyder, MD, MPH, chief quality officer for Select Medical.

"At this time of the year, patients with lung diseases can take some common-sense steps to minimize their risk," says Jarvis. "For example, they can limit exposure to crowds, especially if they are aware that the flu bug has hit their area. Perhaps most importantly, patients can and must get an annual flu shot. As fall begins and we move into the winter months, patients and their doctors need to be especially vigilant."

Jarvis noted that long-term acute-care hospitals such as those operated by Select Medical see an increase in pulmonary and respiratory patients during the winter months. For those patients whose primary care physicians refer them to such a specialized setting, Jarvis said that Select Medical can help.

"In some cases, patients can develop respiratory failure and even require a ventilator when they can no longer breathe on their own," says Jarvis. "These patients must then be weaned from the ventilator. Medical literature suggests that these patients benefit from being transferred to a hospital that specializes in ventilator weaning."

"Our clinicians evaluate patient progress on a daily basis. In our highly specialized setting, trained staff is constantly on the lookout for an individual patient's readiness to breathe on their own again," says Snyder. "We are frequently able to wean patients off their ventilator who could not be weaned at the transferring hospital."

Snyder also says that even a cold or a case of influenza can lead to much more challenging health issues for some Americans.

"Select Medical is committed to helping patients and their families cope with these deeper challenges," notes Snyder, adding that it is "not enough to liberate patients from mechanical ventilation. We want to give patients their lives back, and increasingly, we are able to do that with new tools and protocols."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone six months of age and older be immunized. According to the American Lung Association, between 15 and 60 million Americans suffer from influenza in an average year and more than 250,000 patients are hospitalized. In advance of approaching winter weather, the American Association for Respiratory Care has named Oct. 23-29 as National Respiratory Care Week.

The Select Medical/Opinion Research Poll surveyed 1,005 adults by telephone Oct. 6-9, 2011.