With the winding down of the baseball season and the start of football season, along comes our season of Flu. As you might recall 2017–2018 was a high severity, H3N2-predominant season. It is estimated that 80,000 deaths in the United States last year could be attributed to Influenza, along with 180 children.

Approximately 80% of those deaths occurred in children who did not receive a vaccination. People 65 years and older accounted for approximately 58% of reported influenza associated hospitalizations. As of February 23, 2018 155.3 million doses of flu vaccine were distributed. Last year the overall vaccine effectiveness against both influenza A & B viruses were estimated to be 40%.

This means the flu vaccine reduced the person’s overall risk of having to seek medical advice in a doctor’s office by 40%. While flu vaccine can vary in how well it works, flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications and prevents millions of flu illnesses and related hospitalizations.

Remember it takes about two weeks after a vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body. There are different flu shots that are approved for different age groups.

For the 2018–2019 flu season, the advisory committee on immunization practices recommends annual influenza vaccination for everyone six months and older with any licensed age – appropriate flu vaccine, with no preference expressed for any one vaccine over another.

The CDC recommends that people get the flu vaccine by the end of October. Getting vaccinated later, can still be beneficial and vaccination should be continued to be offered throughout the flu season, even into January or later. Even if a vaccine against flu is not fully effective, a study in 2018 showed that a vaccinated adult who was hospitalized with flu, was 59% less likely to be admitted to the intensive care unit then someone who had not been vaccinated. Among adults in the ICU with flu, vaccinated patients on average spent four days fewer in the hospital than those who were not vaccinated. Vaccinations help protect women during and after pregnancy. Flu vaccine could be life-saving in children. And remember getting vaccinated yourself, not only protects you, but also protects people around you, including those who are more vulnerable to serious flu, like babies and young children, older people and people with certain chronic health conditions.

Look for updated articles this flu season and information to help you protect yourself and your loved ones so that you spend less time at the Medical Facilities and more time pursuing life’s pleasures and interests with your loved ones.