



Caring 4 U



January 2017

National Family Caregiver Support Program *Senior Center of Jackson*

One of the more important aspects of caregiving is making sure the person you are taking care of is protected against health problems that can be easily avoided. The main course of this care is regular checkups, a Primary Care physician who is “quarterbacking” the many doctors your loved one may be seeing, and also making sure both of you...care giver and care receiver, are getting necessary vaccinations.

It’s an ongoing and vexing public health problem: People once vigilant about vaccinating their children aren’t nearly as careful about protecting themselves as they age, even though diseases like influenza, pneumonia and shingles (a.k.a. herpes zoster) are particularly dangerous for older people.

Why is this happening? Vaccines are less likely to be routinely incorporated in adult medical practices. Older adults often have medical issues that take precedence during brief office visits. Your loved one may see specialists who are more focused on cardiology or oncology rather than on the flu or shingles.

Seniors and their caregivers should request vaccinations; The C.D.C. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) publishes guidelines and a quiz that explains which ones are recommended. Zostavax, the current shingles vaccine, reduces the risk of the disease in adults over 60 by half, and the incidence of postherpetic neuralgia (lingering nerve pain that can last for months or even years) by two-thirds.

Cost of these vaccinations can also be an issue for folks on a fixed income, and caregivers too, as they are often family members or friends and neighbors who receive little or no compensation for their caregiving duties. Medicare does cover flu shots and vaccines for pneumococcal pneumonia under Part B, but Zostavax

and Tdap (for tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough) are covered under Part D. This could easily change in the next year, as several pharmaceutical companies are developing or have submitted new shingles vaccines for F.D.A. approval. Shingrix, developed by GlaxoSmithKline is more effective than the current vaccine, reducing the incidence of shingles by 90 percent. Public health leaders don't want older adults waiting to see what the F.D.A. does. One million Americans will get shingles in the coming year. The C.D.C. wants seniors to get vaccinated now.

It may seem like one more thing to add to your endless "to do" list, but in the long run it will both save time and protect your health and that of your loved one. Dr. Carolyn Bridges, associate director for adult immunization at the C.D.C., endorsed an unusual but pragmatic idea...younger family members and caregivers get flu shots themselves, since more than a third of older adults currently don't, at least they won't be transmitting illness to the more vulnerable. Also, consider giving the shingles vaccine as a gift.

Activities Calendar for Family Caregiver Services

Group Support Meeting: Friday, January 20 @ 11-12 (new time!)

This is a Friday Feast Day so please stay for lunch!

Meeting Place: Senior Center of Jackson Hole

830 E. Hansen (307) 733-7300

Contact: Perri Stern Home Care Manager

Contributions Welcomed towards NFCSP Services

If you are interested in having an additional meeting time please contact us