

## Part B Insider (Multispecialty) Coding Alert

### See New Federal Guidance on Flu and COVID-19

**Tip: Make safety a priority this year.**

Flu clinics are a hallmark of many Medicare providers' fall vaccination templates. However, with COVID-19 numbers skyrocketing, this year may be a little different. In fact, the feds are doubling down on their flu shot campaign in hopes of fending off an influenza spike in the middle of a pandemic.

**Context:** In September, CMS launched its vigorous 2020/2021 flu season extravaganza "with a special focus on beneficiaries who experience health disparities," an agency release suggests. The primary reasons for this year's big campaign are to alleviate stress on an already strapped healthcare system while hopefully cutting flu hospitalizations to a minimum and "keeping hospital beds and other medical resources available for COVID-19 patients," CMS says.



Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its provider resources on administering flu vaccines to the public in an Oct. 20 release, highlighting new strategies, tips, and recommendations. In its guidance, the CDC offers a plethora of COVID-19-specific pointers for flu clinic setups. The update includes:

- Pre-planning assistance and checklists, including rundowns of required supplies like extra masks for patients, personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, and social-distancing protocols
- Advice on storage and handling vaccinations during a pandemic
- Pre-administration tips that advise on necessary questions for patients before immunization
- Flu-shot deferral insight for dealing with asymptomatic or recovering COVID-19 patients

**Bonus:** Some extremely handy tools and brochures will help you to circumvent beneficiaries' fears about the myriad of flu strains versus COVID-19 - and how the viruses differ. Plus, the CDC materials explain in detail why getting a flu shot this year doesn't increase the chance of getting a coronavirus, but rather helps to decrease a patient's risk of developing a parallel respiratory illness. This is particularly important after a study came out in January wrongly suggesting that immunizations might increase patients' chances of contracting COVID-19.

**Resource:** Review the provider guidance at [www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/index.htm).