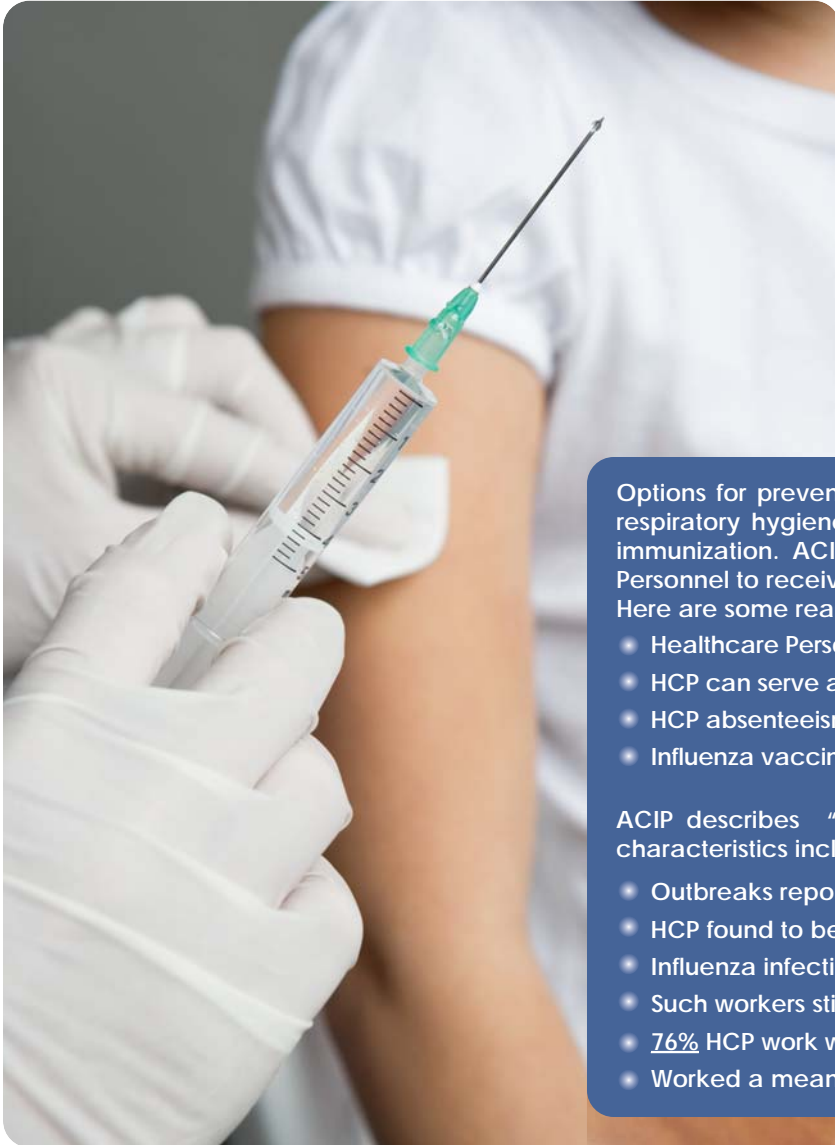




Target Groups for Influenza Vaccination



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has an Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). ACIP has defined the groups who are at risk for flu-related complications as: persons greater or equal to 50 years old; residents of chronic care facilities; persons with chronic medical disorders; children/adults on long-term aspirin therapy; children ages 6 months to 18 years old; and women who will become pregnant during flu season. You might be wondering, "How is this related to medical transportation?" Healthcare Personnel form one of the groups that transmit flu to high-risk persons.

Options for preventing and controlling influenza include: hand hygiene; respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette; contact avoidance; antivirals and immunization. ACIP has determined that it is important for Healthcare Personnel to receive Influenza vaccination.

Here are some reasons:

- Healthcare Personnel (HCP) have frequent contact with high-risk persons
- HCP can serve as a vehicle for the spread of flu
- HCP absenteeism can stress the system
- Influenza vaccination of HCP may reduce patient mortality.

ACIP describes "Healthcare-Associated Influenza". Some interesting characteristics include:

- Outbreaks reported in most case areas
- HCP found to be the "culprit source"
- Influenza infections causes minimal or no symptoms in up to 25%
- Such workers still shed (and spread) virus
- 76% HCP work while ill with an influenza-like-illness
- Worked a mean 2.5 days while ill with an influenza-like-illness

There are pros and cons to Influenza vaccination. This article serves as food for thought. Have a discussion with your Medical Director. Some employers require an "Active Declination/Refusal" for the vaccine. Here is the first paragraph from one:

"I understand that due to my occupational exposure, I may be at risk of acquiring influenza infection. In addition, I may spread influenza to my patients, other healthcare workers and my family, even if I have no symptoms. This can result in serious infection, particularly in persons at high risk for influenza complications."

