

## It's Time to Get Your Flu Shot!

The fall marks the start of the flu season. Here are some common questions and answers about the flu vaccine:

### What is the Flu?

The flu is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Each year the flu causes illness, hospital stays, and even deaths.

### Who Should Get the Flu Shot?

Everyone six months and older should get the flu shot. It is very important for people older than 50 years old.

### Do I Need to Get a Flu Shot?

Yes. This year's flu shot will protect you against three different kinds of flu — including the H1N1 virus — all in one shot.

Getting the flu shot early is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. Other things you can do to protect yourself include washing your hands often with soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand cleaner) and avoiding close contact with people who are sick. The seasonal flu shot is made from a killed or inactivated virus so it is not possible to get the flu from the shot itself.



This year it will be even easier to get a flu shot — you can get your vaccine from certified clinicians at participating pharmacies in Commonwealth Care Alliance's pharmacy network. You will need a prescription from your doctor or nurse practitioner for this service.

**Questions?** Talk to your nurse or another member of your primary care team, or call our Member Services team at 1-866-610-2273. ♦

## Show That You're a Member

Show your Commonwealth Care Alliance member card each time you visit a pharmacy or doctor. As a member, you **DO NOT** have to pay a copay.

If you have any problems, ask the pharmacist or doctor to call 1-866-610-2273 to speak to one of our Member Services team (this number is also on the back of your member card).



Watch out for mail from Commonwealth Care Alliance. We will be sending you these important member materials soon:

- Summary of Benefits 2011
- Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) 2011

# staff PROFILE



**Gioconda Limanek**  
Member Services  
Representative

**How long have you worked at Commonwealth Care Alliance?** Happily since November 2007.

**Which languages do you speak?** Italian, English, and Spanish.

**What does a typical work day look like?** It is busy with follow ups on provider authorizations, member requests, and general calls.

**What is the best part of your job?** Knowing that what I do makes a difference to a group so dear to my heart — elders. My efforts are about optimizing their experience with Commonwealth Care Alliance.

**What do you like to do outside of work?** I love JAZZ! I also enjoy a good book, friends, wine tasting, and long walks by the Reservoir.

## Relax! And Reduce the Effects of Stress

Stress is a part of life that is very hard to avoid completely. Learning to relax is important because it can help you reduce stress and avoid side effects like headaches, back pain, high blood pressure, and sleeping problems.

You may already have your own way to relax such as taking a walk, listening to gentle music, or curling up with a book. Fantastic! Here are a few more ways that you can relax and reduce stress:

### Deep Breathing

- Sit or lay comfortably with one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest.
- Slowly breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The other does not move a lot.
- Slowly breathe out through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can. The hand on your stomach should fall. The other does not move a lot.
- Keep breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth until you feel calm and relaxed.

### Meditation

- Sit comfortably with your eyes closed and try to clear your mind of thoughts. Focusing on the in and out of your breath can help.
- If you get distracted by thoughts that pop into your mind, gently bring your attention back to your breathing.
- Try doing this for 5 minutes a day, then work your way up to 10 minutes or even 15 minutes!

### Yoga

Yoga is an exercise that mixes slow breathing and a series of poses. It can make your body fitter and your mind calmer. It is best to learn yoga from a teacher in a class. You can also find yoga programs on TV that are just for seniors.

**Questions?** Talk to your nurse or another member of your primary care team. ♦

*Source: The Help Guide [helpguide.org](http://helpguide.org)*

# Fall Prevention Awareness

National Fall Prevention Awareness day was held on the first day of fall (September 23) to increase public awareness about how to prevent falls among older adults.

Falls are the leading cause of injury for older Americans. Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and create enormous economic and personal costs.

## Did You Know?

- In 2007, more than 18,000 older Americans died from injuries related to falls
- In 2008, about 2.1 million nonfatal fall injuries in people 65 and older were treated in emergency departments. Over 550,000 of these people had to go to the hospital
- The total cost of fall injuries for older Americans was \$19 billion in 2000. By 2020, this cost is expected to reach \$54.9 billion

## What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Exercise regularly to build strength and balance
- Have your vision checked
- Make your home safer with handrails for both sides of the stairs
- Ask your primary care team to review your medications. Some medicine makes you dizzy and your care team may be able to prescribe something else
- Before you get out of bed, sit for a few minutes, and breathe deeply. This can help you feel more fully awake

**Questions?** Talk to your nurse or another member of your primary care team. ♦

Source: National Council on Aging [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)



## Local Member Meetings are held in your communities.

Look for your invitation in the near future. Families and caregivers are welcome!

### Questions?

Call Rosa at 1-866-610-2273 ext. 226



# Get Cold Relief This Winter

Did you know that low-income households or homes where all adults are aged 65 years or over are protected from electric or gas shutoff?

Utility assistance programs in Massachusetts also help low-income residents pay for heat, weatherization, and heating system repairs.

## YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR A NUMBER OF THESE PROGRAMS.

Call the Massachusetts Heat Line at 1-800-632-8175 to check that you are eligible for these programs and to learn how to apply for them.

If you still need help, please call our Member Services team at 1-866-610-2273. ♦



Visit the Commonwealth Care Alliance web site for the latest in member information

[www.commonwealthcare.org](http://www.commonwealthcare.org)



Call our Member Services Team, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**1-866-610-2273**

To share your own recipes or stories, or if you have an idea for the newsletter, contact Nerissa J. Fry at 1-866-610-2273 ext. 244 or e-mail [nfry@commonwealthcare.org](mailto:nfry@commonwealthcare.org)



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**Health or Wellness or  
Prevention Information**