

# The shifting landscape of *Corporate Flu Shots*

---

Dr. Tom Safranek and Alan Kohl joined us for a webinar about the landscape of corporate flu shots. Both have a unique perspective and expertise on field.

On the webinar, Dr. Safranek and Alan provided great information from both a medical and business perspective. They landed on a consensus that while any flu protection is beneficial, there's been a steady sway towards particular kinds of shots in recent history.

This document highlights some of the insight our TotalWellness experts had to offer. To view the full webinar recording, head to our website.

---



**Alan Kohl**

President and Founder

Alan has over 20 years of experience analyzing flu and vaccination trends. Throughout that time, he's developed a true passion for and expertise in all things health and wellness related.



**Tom Safranek, M.D.**

Medical Director

Dr. Safranek is the state epidemiologist for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. He spends lots of time tracking the flu cases reported each year to make suggestions for future action.

## How does the flu shot work?

The flu shot is a vaccine to protect your body against the flu. The goal of any vaccine is to use an altered version of the virus to trigger immune recognition by the body. Basically it's a way to prepare the body to fight an illness—without actually having had the illness. That way, when your body is exposed to the illness, it has everything it needs to stay healthy.



Vaccines vary for different illnesses. The CDC has put together an advisory committee to gather information, evaluate vaccines and make vaccine recommendations. You can use them as a reference by visiting [this link](#). These experts score the flu shot highly for safety, meaning there is very little risk for harmful side effects.

The flu shot is unique, however, because the flu virus is very unique. The flu virus has the ability to mutate—which means it can change its structure and genetic makeup. Nature is often the cause of flu mutations because the virus can be passed from humans to animals and back. This type of transition means the virus is more likely to change because it's adapting to its new environment. Each changed virus is called a new strain of the flu.

Because it uses an altered version of a virus, the flu shot only protects against the particular strains of the flu used to make it. That means that as the flu virus changes, the vaccine needs to change too.

For that reason, every year the world's best and brightest scientists come together to select strains of the flu to be used in the flu shot. These scientists look at patterns of flu strains that have emerged to predict which strains we need to protect against in the next flu season. Those recommendations are used to create the flu shot for any given year.

## How is the flu shot made?

Each year, the flu shot is made up of three or four different flu strains. Flu shots that are made up of three strains protect against those three strains. They're called trivalent vaccines. Flu shots that are made up of four strains protect against those four strains, and are called quadrivalent vaccines.

Trivalent flu shots protect against two influenza A flu viruses and one influenza B virus. Quadrivalent flu shots protect against the same influenza viruses as the trivalent shot, but they also include an extra strain of influenza B flu virus. So a quadrivalent shot will protect you against everything a trivalent shot does (two influenza A and one influenza B), PLUS an extra strain of influenza B virus.

Flu shots can take months to make. Manufacturers begin making flu shots as soon as the experts make their recommendations in the spring. A lot of the flu shot manufacturers make both trivalent and quadrivalent vaccine. As quadrivalent has been shown to offer a bit more protection, however, some manufacturers have chosen to switch to only making quadrivalent flu shots.

There have also been a few big mergers, which means there are fewer flu shot manufacturers from which to order vaccine. These mergers have brought about a little more risk for supply issues. With fewer manufacturers in the game, if one has problems making flu shots or is delayed for any reason there might be a bigger impact on people who want to get a flu shot.

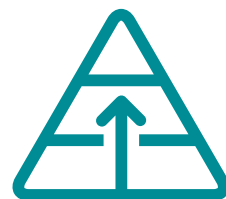
The flu shot is still a priority for public health. It's also the single best way to protect yourself against the flu. There's no need to worry that flu shots won't be available to you or your employees. Similarly, some protection is better than no protection at all. While quadrivalent shots offer a wider range of protection, trivalent shots are still effective and a strong step towards flu prevention.

## How is the market changing?

Researchers will continue to make changes to the flu shot to try and stay ahead of the changing virus. As science keeps supporting the idea that more protection is better, though, the market is slowly shifting towards quadrivalent flu shots. Again, some protection is better than none—so trivalent flu shots aren't bad. In the future, though, quadrivalent might be the only kind available.

This shift is important to keep in mind when it comes to planning and budgeting for your future corporate flu shot events. We've been lucky that the price of the flu shot has remained relatively stable. Quadrivalent flu shots usually run at a 25-30% higher cost than trivalent flu shots. As the market shifts, however, the prices might shift too.

With that in mind, it's important to be flexible as you plan for future flu shot events at your company. If you haven't yet switched your flu shots to quadrivalent, you might consider doing so before the market makes that choice for you. Not only will your employees be better protected, but you'll be able to better plan for the potential change in corporate cost.



## How can you protect your workforce?

We know that the flu shot is the single best way to protect yourself and your employees from the flu. The best way to harness that power is to make the flu shot convenient for your employees by bringing it into the office, or providing vouchers for local pharmacies. There are other things you can try on top of the flu shot to avoid an office epidemic when flu season rolls around.

One of the most important prevention strategies is to encourage employees to stay home if they're feeling sick. Bringing germs into the office is the quickest way to spread them among all of your employees. Be flexible during flu season. Consider allowing employees to work from home or telecommute so they don't feel pressured to bring their flu germs to the office.

Another way to stop the flu in its tracks is to focus on hand-washing. No, you can't make your employees wash their hands. You can, however, make sure you provide enough soap and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer for them to use. It's also helpful to make these things convenient by placing them in common and shared areas.

Finally, it's very helpful to be proactive rather than reactive. Be sure your office is prepared for flu season before people start getting sick. That means educating your workforce about both the flu and the flu shot. It also means promoting health at work and providing resources your employees can use.

The biggest problem we face in creating a healthy society is making change happen. We've done the research. We know what works and we know what helps. It's time to adopt what we know to work to avoid the complications that arise each year during flu season.



---

To learn more about the shifting landscape of corporate flu shots, check out Alan's and Dr. Safranek's insight on this webinar.

You can get started protecting your workforce from the flu by talking to a TotalWellness account executive about bringing flu shots into your workplace. Learn more and get a price quote [here](#).

---

TotalWellnessHealth.com  
[news@totalwellnesshealth.com](mailto:news@totalwellnesshealth.com)

9320 H Court | Omaha, NE 68127  
1.888.434.4358

