

November 2001

PATIENT POWERline from the desk of Marie Savard, M.D.

RE: Immunizations

Dear Friends,

As this holiday season approaches, most of us will be feeling both sorrow and joy. I am reminded that what matters to me now more than anything is the closeness and caring of my family and friends. May we all reach out to those in need.

Get the Flu Shot Today!!

Flu season is just around the corner and doctors are now giving the flu shot in their offices. We can all benefit from the flu shot, so make an appointment today. If you have any type of chronic illness such as diabetes, heart, kidney or lung disease - or have a compromised immune system for any reason - you should not delay. Within two weeks of getting the shot you will be protected against this years' strain of the flu virus.

What about the pneumonia shot??

If you are over 65 and haven't had the pneumonia vaccine you can get both shots at the same time. Seniors over 65 and anyone who has an increased susceptibility to pneumonia should get the pneumonia vaccine. You need to get the pneumonia shot only once, however many doctors suggest repeating the pneumonia vaccine after 5 to 10 years to boost your immunity. If you get a second dose of the pneumonia vaccine too soon it won't hurt you but you may end up with a sore arm.

Keep a record of all your immunizations

After you get your shots, make sure you keep a record for future reference. You can print out the Health-at-a-Glance form on my web site, http://www.drsavard.com/system_record_excerpt1.htm, to use as a permanent record of your health information. The form includes a place to record the date of your last flu, pneumonia and tetanus shots. (Speaking of tetanus shots, everyone needs a tetanus shot every ten years. Do you remember when you last had one? It is much easier to get one now than rush to an emergency room some weekend when you step on a nail or cut your finger.) This information is also critical to carry in case of an emergency - so get a copy of the emergency health information form (health-at-a-glance), fill it out, and tuck it in your wallet next to your insurance card.

Ask for a copy of your medical records at your next doctor visit.

My closest friend, a fellow physician, called me about a patient she saw in her office today for a medical evaluation. The patient brought to her a typed letter requesting a copy of the consultation report from the visit and any other medical records. As she read the letter, she was struck how similar the words sounded to a sample letter that I enclose in my book, *The Savard Health Record*, Time-Life, Inc. 2000 on page 10 of the user's manual, http://www.drsavard.com/system_record.htm. Upon questioning the patient, she learned that he was using my system and simply adapted the letter from the book to meet his needs. He was so impressed to

learn how easy it was to get a copy of his medical records simply by giving this letter to his physicians at the time of the office visit. His doctors have all agreed to give him copies of his information. I have found that doctors keep this letter on file in their patient's chart to remind them to send future test results as well.

This system of giving the doctor a typed request for information has worked for hundreds of my patients - and for my parents as well. My parents were originally afraid they would offend their doctors by asking for copies of their records. They now give each doctor a signed letter stating why they want their information. Their doctors have been only too eager to help out. I can say that by having this information at their fingertips they have received better care and avoided medical mishaps as well.

Here is a version of the letter I wrote in The Savard Health Record. Feel free to copy this letter for your next doctor visit..

November 14, 2001

Joseph Smith, M.D.
910 Any Avenue, Suite 11
Hometown, USA 45678

Dear Dr. Smith,

I've decided to take responsibility for collecting and filing copies of my medical records. That way, I'll be in a position to keep track of my own health information and furnish pertinent data to everyone involved in my care. Putting together this type of information base will help coordinate the work of everyone involved in my care.

Thank you for helping me participate in my own care by sending me copies of (list whatever the doctor or facility probably has, such as laboratory tests, heart testing, consultation and hospital discharge summaries and operative reports).

Sincerely,

Jane Doe
Date of birth: March 10, 1946

If you have a lot of records and decide to send the letter rather than give it to your doctor during the next visit, you might want to add the following: "Enclosed is a stamped, self-addressed envelope along with my check for \$15 to cover the expense of copying my records."

Good luck! I welcome your stories about how easy or difficult it is to get copies of your medical records. Write to me at Dr.Savard@drsavard.com.

Here's to your health,

Marie Savard, M.D.

To learn more about how to get involved more fully in your own health care please visit my web site at <http://www.DrSavard.com>. Please feel free to share this message with your friends and family. I would also welcome your stories and questions, <http://www.info@DrSavard.com>.

Be sure to visit us at <http://www.drsavard.com> to check out upcoming events and press clips.

Click here to download a free office visit form http://www.drsavard.com/system_record_excerpt2.htm

Click here to download a free health-at-a-glance form to list all your vital health information in your wallet
http://www.drsavard.com/system_record_excerpt1.htm

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