

# Enabling Healthy Choices



## Increasing flu vaccine uptake among New York City employees

**To increase uptake of flu vaccines and maintain a healthy workforce during the 2016-17 flu season, New York City’s Behavioral Design Team (NYC BDT) partnered with WorkWell NYC—the City’s workplace wellness program within the Office of Labor Relations (OLR)—to design behaviorally-informed emails to encourage New York City employees to visit a worksite flu clinic. Through a randomized controlled trial, the NYC BDT found that the behavioral emails more than doubled click-through rates<sup>i</sup> and statistically increased appointment sign-ups. Most importantly, one version of the email increased vaccine uptake by 5% at worksite locations. Based on these results, WorkWell NYC distributed the behaviorally informed email to the full workforce during the 2017-18 flu season.**

Every year during the flu season, millions of New Yorkers get their flu shots. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that about 45% of New Yorkers over the age of 18 received a flu vaccine for the 2016-17 flu season. However, 45% is far from the CDC’s flu vaccination target of 70%, and as a result thousands of flu-related hospitalizations and deaths occur every year.<sup>ii</sup>

Within the New York City government workforce, only 21% of employees received flu shots in the 2015-16 flu season. Over 700,000 of the nearly 900,000 City employees, pre-Medicare retirees, and their family members enrolled in City-provided health insurance went unprotected from the flu, risking their own health and spreading the flu to others. As a part of the City’s dedicated effort to lower health care costs and increase the uptake of preventive care, WorkWell NYC sought ways to encourage City employees to get their flu shots.

As part of these efforts, WorkWell NYC partnered with the NYC BDT to develop a behaviorally informed email campaign that encouraged employees to visit a worksite flu clinic. The more effective of the two email designs used the strategy of **enhanced active choice**, whereby employees were asked to make a choice that had an obvious right answer: “Yes, I’ll get a vaccine to reduce my risk of getting and spreading the flu” or “No, I will not get a vaccine, even if it means not protecting myself and others from getting the flu.” By clicking “Yes,” City employees were directed to the website where they could make an appointment to receive a vaccine at their closest worksite clinic. The email also clearly outlined the options for where to get a vaccine using graphics and direct links.

The email campaign was tested using a randomized controlled trial where one-third of employees were assigned to receive the first behaviorally designed email design, one-third were assigned to receive

### Highlights

- ▶ During the 2015-2016 flu season, only 21% of the NYC workforce got their flu shots.
- ▶ An email campaign leveraged “enhanced active choice” to prompt more workers to get their flu shots, protecting themselves and others.

<sup>i</sup> The percentage of people who visit a registration page using a hyperlink in the emails sent.

<sup>ii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “2015-2016 Estimated Influenza Illnesses, Medical Visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths Averted by Vaccination in the United States.” <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/2015-16.htm>.

the second behaviorally designed email design, and one-third of employees were assigned to receive WorkWell NYC’s standard email. When the BDT compared outcomes across the groups, the behaviorally informed email that leveraged enhanced active choice outperformed the control email across three outcomes (click rates, pre-registration, and vaccination uptake). Click rates on the registration site link doubled, pre-registrations increased by 12%, and flu vaccine uptake at worksite clinics increased by 5%.<sup>iii</sup> The other behaviorally informed email outperformed the control across click-through rates but did not improve vaccine uptake. Based on these results, WorkWell NYC deployed the behaviorally informed email version that leveraged enhanced choice to all New York City employees during the 2017-18 flu season and saw a 10% increase in worksite flu vaccinations.

### Behaviorally informed email

**From:** City of New York  
**Subject:** [FINAL REMINDER] Schedule your flu vaccine before it's too late

**This is your final reminder:**  
**Flu season is here. [Book your appointment today.](#)**  
 Check the updated [calendar](#). Your worksite may provide free vaccines onsite.

**Thank you to the thousands of city employees who have already received their flu vaccines.**

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Check your choice:

**Yes, I'll get a vaccine to reduce my risk of getting and spreading the flu.**


**No, I will not get a vaccine, even if it means not protecting myself and others from getting the flu.**

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**Which is best for you? (Select below)**

	Free	Onsite	Effective	Click below:
 <b>Your worksite</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Book at your worksite</a>
<b>AdvantageCare Physicians facility</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Book with AdvantageCare Physicians</a>
<b>Participating pharmacy</b>	Free with health insurance card		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Locate a pharmacy</a> <small>(call ahead to confirm participation)</small>
<b>Your doctor's office</b>	Flu vaccine appointments only		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Call your in-network doctor or find one here</a>

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 **#GotMyFluShot**

### Business-as-usual email



Last month, WorkWell NYC launched its 3rd annual Free Flu Vaccination campaign to help City employees protect themselves and their families against the flu. Thousands of employees have already received their flu shots – join them today!

**All City employees who receive health insurance through the city can get a free flu shot:**

- At the worksite** – Worksite clinics will be held at participating agencies across the city through November 23rd, 2016. Schedule your appointment by [clicking here](#) (username: nyc, password: flushot) or call 866-481-4391 Mon-Fri from 8AM-6PM. **ALL employees eligible for health benefits, regardless of insurance provider, can get a flu shot at the workplace for no charge.**
- At a participating pharmacy** – All employees, retirees, and their dependents can receive a flu shot free of charge at participating pharmacies. Check with your insurance provider to identify a participating pharmacy in your area and bring your insurance card to the pharmacy. You can use the NYC flu locator to assist in finding a pharmacy [here](#).
- At an in-network physician** – All employees, retirees, and their dependents can get flu shots free of cost at an in-network physician's office. (Co-payment will be waived when the sole purpose of going to the doctor is to get your flu vaccine.) To find a physician covered by your insurance, visit [zoodoc.com/nyc](#).
- At an AdvantageCare Physicians (ACPNY) medical office** – Flu shots will be available at all 36 ACPNY locations, including the new ACPNY Express for City employees at 52 Duane St. Schedule your appointment [here](#) or call 646-680-3000, Mon-Thurs from 8AM-6PM, Fri 8AM-5PM, or Sat 9AM-1:30PM.


**ALL employees, dependents, and retirees, regardless of insurance provider, can get a flu shot at ACPNY for no charge.** ACPNY locations will also provide immunizations to dependents (including pregnant women and children under 18 years old), pre-Medicare retirees, and spouses/dependents of pre-Medicare retirees.

Flu vaccination can prevent days or weeks of sickness and misery, doctor's visits and hospitalization. All you need to do to get your free vaccination is bring your City of New York employee ID and your insurance card to your appointment!

Here is what your peers said about their workplace flu vaccination experience last year:

- "It was great to be able to go to work and only take a few minutes of my time to get the shot and get back to work. It was a very pleasant experience. Thank you!"
- "I really appreciate the convenience of getting the flu shot at work as opposed to scheduling a day off to receive it at my doctor's office. The process was simple, well organized, and efficient. Thanks again!"
- "So simple and quick. Thanks for making it so convenient to stay healthy!"

Got your flu shot? Tweet about it to spread the word and encourage others! #GotMyFluShot



<sup>iii</sup> These results are marginally statistically significant at the 10% level (p<0.10).