

lines as healthcare providers and as lifelines for those who need them most. From planning ahead to being on the front lines when emergencies hit, our nurses play an indispensable role in keeping our community safe, healthy, and cared for. The extra steps they take—from securing medications to coordinating with local emergency teams—are a true testament to their compassion and commitment.

The toll on these nurses is immense. Research shows that prolonged disaster work leads to stress, fatigue, and emotional strain (Nix & Caldwell, 2018). However, nurses consistently rise to the challenge, driven by a solid duty to their patients and communities. Studies also show that having a sense of purpose and the support of colleagues helps them persevere (Gillespie, Chaboyer, & Wallis, 2007).

Florida's nurses are, without question, some of the most resilient professionals in healthcare. From community health settings like CAN Community Health to large hospital systems, their ability to continue delivering care under extreme circumstances is a testament to their strength and commitment. It is time we recognized the role they play—not just as healthcare providers but as pillars of our community during Florida's most challenging times.

The next time a hurricane looms, remember this: while the storm may be fierce, the spirit of Florida's nurses is fiercer. They are quiet heroes who ensure that our healthcare system endures, no matter the storm. They deserve our admiration, gratitude, and unwavering support. By recognizing the extra effort they put in—from planning to recovery—we can better

appreciate the critical part nurses play in keeping our healthcare systems strong and ready for whatever comes next. ■

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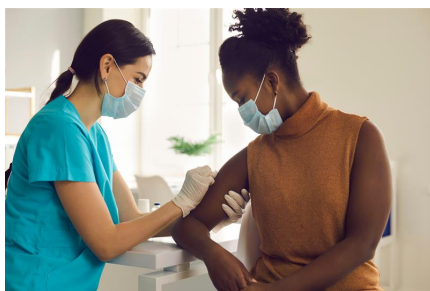
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Seasonal Plans? Include Vaccine Protection!

Debbie Hogan, RN, BSN, MPH



We all look forward to the holiday season. Unfortunately, because the weather is colder and we are coming together inside with friends and family, there is also the possibility of exposure to contagious diseases like Flu and COVID-19.

We know that vaccines save lives! Data shows us that over 50,000 adult deaths were attributable to vaccine preventable diseases. These deaths can be prevented. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and misinformation that is spread on social media, vaccine confidence - the trust people have in vaccines - is

impacted. Adult vaccination rates remain below the Healthy People 2020 targets for Flu and several other vaccines.

What can we, as nurses, do to help? Nurses can be a resource for providing credible and science-based information on vaccines and resources for vaccines to our patients. This education can be lifesaving and lead to increased vaccination rates with fewer illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths for our patients and family. Sometimes it just takes hearing the recommendation from a trusted provider to make a difference in compliance.

What about our own health? Vaccine protection is important in maintaining our health as caregivers too. The American Nurses Association, the nurses' professional organization, stresses the professional and ethical responsibility of nurses with regards to vaccines. In addition to protecting ourselves and our clients, we model the importance of vaccines and foster trust. We have an essential role in protect-

ing our patients' health with vaccines.

Resources about recommended vaccines can be found on the CDC website at [cdc.gov/vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines). Many health insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover the cost of Flu and COVID-19 vaccines, as well as children's vaccines. It is hoped that, with advocacy, the Federal government will one day provide a "Vaccines for Adults" program, as they do a "Vaccines for Children" program now. ■

References online:

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Debbie Hogan is a retired Public Health Nurse who has devoted her career to promoting community health issues and preventive healthcare. She has presented numerous programs to Florida Nurses Association members on public health issues, as well as articles in the "Florida Nurse" on preventive health issues, the importance of vaccines and the critical role of public health professionals.

