

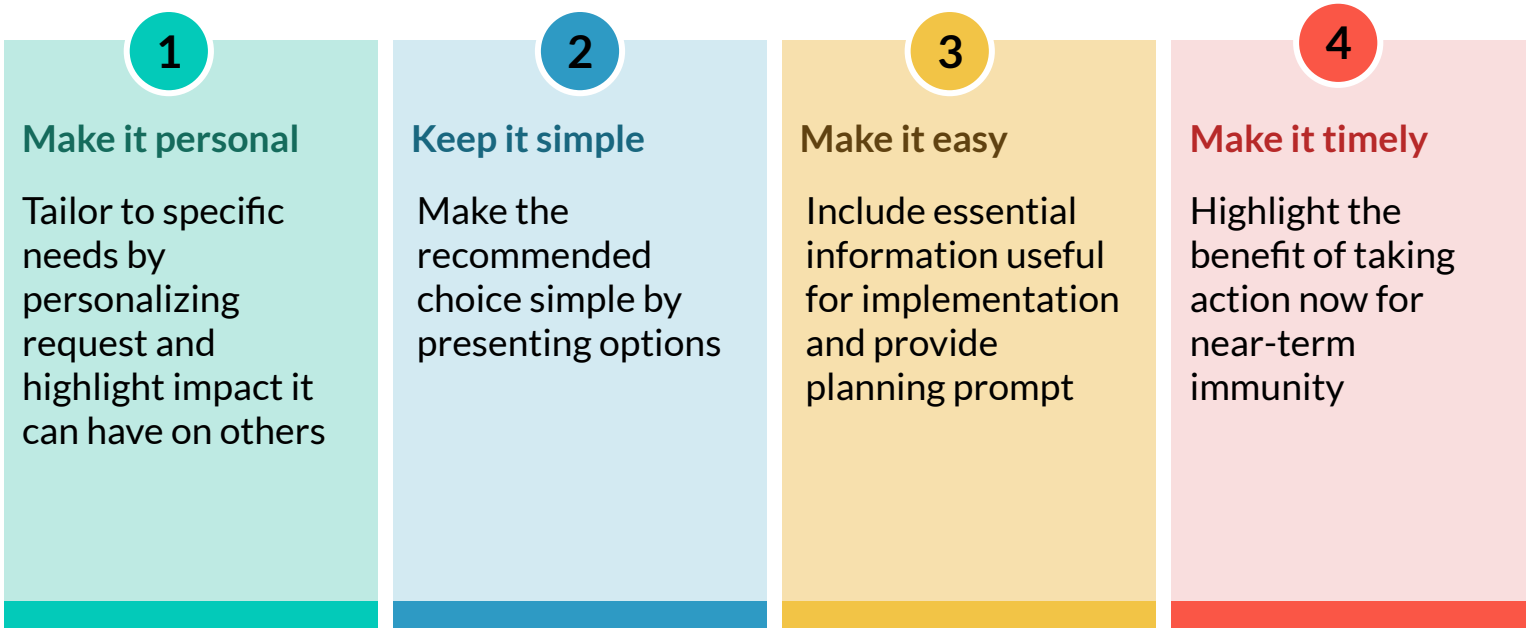
# Increasing Flu Vaccine Uptake Among Veterans at the New York Harbor VA



**Project Summary:** Influenza or flu causes more than 9 million illnesses and more than 12,000 deaths in the United States annually. The VA provides free flu shots to enrolled Veterans and aims to increase flu vaccination rates nationwide. In collaboration with the New York Harbor VA Health Care System, the Office of Evaluation Sciences (OES) designed email messages to send to enrolled Veterans.

**Intervention Description:** Veterans were randomly assigned to an email (treatment) group or a no-email (control) group. The email group received three emails during the flu season, with information about how to get a flu shot, and elements, based on evidence from the behavioral sciences, that were designed to increase individuals' motivation and follow-through. In particular, the emails framed getting a flu shot as a default course of action, the messages included an implementation prompt (a prompt to make a plan for getting a flu shot at a specific time and place), and the messages presented the benefits of a flu shot as concrete and near term (immunity beginning within two weeks).

The reminder emails were designed with four principles in mind: ***make it personal, keep it simple, make it easy, and make it timely*** (More information on designing effective communications can be found [here](#).) The way these principles were applied to the messages is described below:



For more information on this intervention or to start a conversation, **please contact** [oes@gsa.gov](mailto:oes@gsa.gov).

The OES project page for this project can be accessed [here](#).



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

If you haven't gotten your flu shot, it is time! By getting the flu shot, you don't just protect yourself. You can protect your family, friends, and other veterans, too.

Here are your options for getting a free flu shot in the VA New York Harbor Health Care System:

**1. Walk-in flu shots.** Walk-in flu shots are available from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm in the primary care clinics at the Manhattan campus, the Brooklyn campus, and the St. Albans Community Living Center and in the community clinics in Harlem and Staten Island

**2. At your next scheduled appointment.** Just ask your nurse or doctor at your next appointment. All VA clinics are ready to give you your flu shot.

For more information, including locations and directions to all of the locations listed above, visit the [VA New York Harbor website](#).

**Did you know?** The flu shot starts protecting you within two weeks and lasts the whole flu season. Without it, you are more than twice as likely to get the flu, on average — and if you get the flu, you could pass it on to others.

Do you have questions about the flu shot? Call our Nurse Helpline at [800-877-6976](tel:800-877-6976). Also, if you get a flu shot somewhere other than a VA clinic, call your primary care nurse and let us know.

Sincerely,

Your care providers at VA New York Harbor



Tailor to specific needs by highlighting how getting flu shots can protect oneself and others (including other veterans)

Make recommended choices simple by presenting options in short, easy-to-digest bullets and links to website for more information

Highlight benefit of taking action now and presenting near-term benefit of immunity

Trusted sender helps personalize request

Many people find it helpful to make a plan for getting the flu shot. Print this email, write down your plan, and stick it on your fridge so you won't forget!

I will get the flu shot:

What day? \_\_\_\_\_ What time? \_\_\_:\_\_\_ am/pm

Where? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you get there? \_\_\_\_\_

Include essential information for implementation that individual can fill out