

Take time to get a flu vaccine

The best way to protect against influenza is to get a flu vaccine every flu season.

Why get vaccinated against influenza (flu)?

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory disease that can lead to serious complications, hospitalization, or even death. Anyone can get the flu, and vaccination is the single best way to protect against influenza. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to family and friends.

Flu viruses are constantly changing. Each flu season, different flu viruses can spread. Getting vaccinated against the flu every season protects against the three influenza viruses that research indicates will cause the most illness this season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the flu vaccine as the first and most important step in preventing flu.

Who should get a flu vaccine?

Everyone is at risk for seasonal influenza.

Health experts now recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older get vaccinated against influenza. Each flu season, different flu viruses can spread and they can affect people differently based on their body's ability to fight infection. Even healthy children and adults can get very sick from the flu, but certain people are at greater risk for serious complications if they get the flu, including:

- People 65 years and older
- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People with certain chronic health conditions like asthma and COPD, diabetes (both type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurological conditions, and certain other health conditions
- Pregnant women

See "People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications" at http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm for a full list.



Who should NOT get a flu vaccine?

Influenza vaccine is not approved for use in children younger than 6 months so they should not be vaccinated, but their caregivers should be vaccinated instead. And people who are sick with fever should wait until their symptoms pass to get vaccinated.

Some people should not be vaccinated before talking to their doctor. This includes:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed *Guillain-Barré syndrome* (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.

If you have questions about whether you should get a flu vaccine, consult your health care provider.

When to Get Vaccinated

Get vaccinated as soon as vaccine becomes available in your community. Getting vaccinated as soon as it is available provides protection in case the flu season comes early and will protect you throughout the entire flu season.

Flu vaccines are offered in many doctors' offices and clinics. Even if you don't have a regular doctor or nurse, you can get a flu vaccine at other places like your local health department, a pharmacy, an urgent care clinic, and maybe your school, college health center, or workplace.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

What kinds of flu vaccines are available?

There are two types of flu vaccine available:

1. An **inactivated** (killed) vaccine, also known as the **flu shot**, which is given by injection into the muscle, and
2. A **live, attenuated** (weakened) vaccine, also known as the **nasal spray**, which is sprayed into the nostrils.

This chart indicates who can get each of the two vaccines.

	(Inactivated) Flu shot	(LIAV) Nasal spray
Healthy, non-pregnant children and adults (2-49 years)	X	X
Pregnant women	X	
Infants (6 – 24 months)	X	
People with chronic conditions like asthma or diabetes	X	
Older Adults/Seniors	X	

What are the benefits of getting the flu vaccine?

- + **PROTECTION for yourself.**
- + **PROTECTION for newborns and infants who are too young to get vaccinated.**
- + **PROTECTION for people at high risk for complications from flu.**

Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Over a period of 30 years, between 1976 and 2007, estimates of flu-related deaths in the United States range from a low of 3,000 people to a high of about 49,000 people. Each year, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from the flu, including an average of 20,000 children younger than 5 years of age.



The 2009-2010 flu season is an example of how unpredictable flu can be. That season followed the emergence of a new H1N1 influenza virus in the spring of 2009. This virus caused the first influenza pandemic (global outbreak of disease) in more than 40 years. Thousands of healthy children and adults had to visit the doctor or were hospitalized from flu complications.

What are the side effects of the flu vaccine?

Flu shots are safe and cannot give you the flu because they are made from killed or very weakened virus, but there may be some mild side effects from the two different vaccines.

The most common side effects from the flu shot are soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot is given.

Side effects from the nasal spray vaccine include runny nose, cough, or nasal congestion.

Which flu vaccine is for pregnant women?

The flu shot (not the nasal spray) is safe for pregnant women during any trimester. Nursing mothers can receive either the flu shot or the nasal spray vaccine.

Everyone, 6 months of age and older, is recommended to get vaccinated against the flu.

A flu vaccine reduces your risk of illness, hospitalization, or even death and can prevent you from spreading the virus to your loved ones. Protect your family from flu: get vaccinated.

For more information about the seriousness of influenza and the benefits of influenza vaccination, talk to your doctor or nurse, visit www.flu.gov, www.cdc.gov, or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.