

Influenza Vaccine

Keep your holidays flu-free

Did you know that the best time to get the flu vaccine is in the fall? This is because one or two months after you get the flu shot is when it gives you the most protection. So if you get your flu shot in October, that means you'll have a much better chance of staying flu-free during the holidays.

Every year, influenza, also known as "the flu," is involved with thousands of deaths, most of which happen in adults over the age of 65.¹ But young children can also get very sick from the flu—enough to be sent to the hospital. In fact, about 20,000 children, aged 5 years or younger, go the hospital with the flu each year. This is why getting the flu shot to help prevent the flu is so important.²



Some are more likely to get the flu

Many of us can get the flu and get better without too much of a problem. But if the following factors apply to you, or someone in your care, it's best to talk to your doctor to make sure you're getting the proper care and if you should receive a flu vaccine:⁶

- **Age:** Flu often targets younger and older populations.
- **Living conditions:** If you live close to others, such as in a nursing home or in the military, the flu virus may be passed around more easily.
- **Weak immune system:** Certain medical treatments or drugs can weaken your immune system, so be sure to check with your doctor if you're on a treatment plan.
- **Chronic illness:** Chronic illnesses, such as asthma, diabetes or heart problems may also increase your chances of getting the flu.
- **Pregnancy:** Pregnant women are more likely to experience complications from the flu virus, especially in the second and third trimesters.

In addition, caregivers, healthcare workers, and other people living with or caring for those at high risk for complications from the flu should get a shot to help protect themselves and the people they care for. A flu shot is approved for anyone over 6 months of age, whether healthy, with chronic medical conditions or pregnant. Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions.

How can I avoid the flu?

Someone who has the flu can spread it by coughing, sneezing or talking.⁸ During flu season, try to wash your hands often with soap and water, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth and keep heavily used surfaces like sinks, toilets and doorknobs clean. Other ways to stay healthy include:⁵

- Get plenty of rest, manage your stress, drink plenty of water and eat healthy food
- If you sneeze or cough, be sure to cover your mouth and nose with a tissue
- If you think you might have the flu, stay home for at least 24 hours after your temperature returns to normal

The flu can be a very serious virus that can land you in the hospital and put your life on the line – even if you're healthy. So get a vaccine this fall and give yourself the best change for a healthy holiday season and a happy new year!

What if I got the flu shot last year?

Because there are different types of flu virus and they may change from year to year, the vaccine is usually different each year to help fight the most common strains. That's why it's important to get a flu shot each year.

Will the flu shot give me the flu?

The flu shot doesn't cause the flu, but sometimes people have already been exposed to the flu before they get the shot. That's why it's important to get the shot early. The most common side effects of the shot are mild soreness, redness or swelling where you get the shot. For more information, talk with your healthcare provider.

I'm pretty healthy. Do I need to get a flu shot?

One out of every five people could get sick from the flu according to the CDC, regardless of overall health. Getting the vaccine is your best protection against this disease.

I heard that it doesn't work.

The flu shot protects against three or four of the common virus strains going around for the season. Sometimes different types of the flu virus start spreading. Even if they are different from those in the vaccine, the CDC says you can still benefit from the shot and possibly have a less severe case if you get another type of flu virus.

I'm allergic to eggs.

Good news: An egg-free version of the flu shot is now available at many locations. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

What if I think I already have the flu?

See your healthcare provider or visit an urgent care clinic in your network right away if you experience flu-like symptoms. Your healthcare provider may be able to prescribe an antiviral drug to help reduce the severity and duration of the flu.

Source:

- 1 <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/vaccineeffect.htm>
- 2 http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/a_flu_guide_for_parents.pdf
- 3 <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season-2015-2016.htm>
- 4 <http://www.flu.gov/prevention-vaccination/prevention/index.html>
- 5 http://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases_conditions/hic_influenza
- 6 <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/flu/basics/risk-factors/con-20035101>
- 7 <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/general/flu-vaccine-benefits.pdf>
- 8 <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/spread.htm>