

# 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.

There are two reasons for getting a yearly flu vaccine.

- 1) The first reason is that because flu viruses are constantly changing, flu vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the most recent and most commonly circulating viruses.
- 2) The second reason that annual vaccination is recommended is that a person's immune protection from vaccination declines over time and annual vaccination is needed for optimal protection.

## 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. While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it's especially important that the following groups get vaccinated either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
  - o Health care workers
  - o Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
  - o Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)



Some children 6 months to 8 years of age may need 2 doses of the vaccine to be fully protected. Ask your doctor.

For a complete list, see "Who Should Get Vaccinated Against Influenza" at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/whoshouldvax.htm>

## 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 Guillian-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.

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## When to Get Vaccinated

**Get vaccinated as soon as vaccine becomes available in your community.** Vaccination before December is best since this timing ensures that protective antibodies are in place before flu activity is typically at its highest. However, flu season can last as late as May so getting vaccinated later in the flu season could still provide protective benefit. About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against the influenza viruses in the vaccine develop in the body.

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.

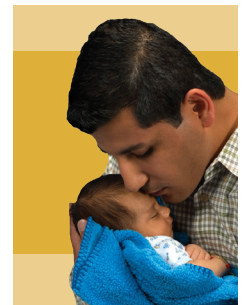
## What kinds of flu vaccines are available?

There are two types of flu vaccine available:

- The "flu shot" — an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

### **There are three different flu shots available:**

- a regular flu shot approved for people ages 6 months and older
  - a high-dose flu shot approved for people 65 and older, and
  - an intradermal flu shot approved for people 18 to 64 years of age.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine — a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that is given as a nasal spray (sometimes called LAIV for "Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine"). The viruses in the nasal spray vaccine do not cause the flu. LAIV is approved for use in healthy\* people 2 through 49 years of age who are not pregnant.



## 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.

## 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 types of vaccines (shot and nasal spray).

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.

### **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.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.