

# The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older

Flu can be dangerous for anyone. The best way to prevent flu is to get yourself and everyone in your family vaccinated. Flu vaccines are safe. This fact sheet explains the dangers of flu, tells you when to get the vaccine, describes several options, explains possible side effects of the vaccine, and discusses how effective the vaccine is in protecting against flu.



Almost everyone 6 months and older should get a yearly flu vaccine.

## RISKS FROM FLU:



Hospitalization



Illness lasting several days



Death



Missed work and school

## About the flu vaccine

### You need a flu vaccine, even if you are healthy.

Flu can lead to serious illness, including pneumonia. Even if you are healthy, you can get very sick if you catch the flu.

## Vaccination is the most important step in protecting yourself and loved ones against the flu.

Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, they can still spread the virus to others. Vaccination is the best protection against the flu and flu-related complications.

Pregnant women, young children, older people, and people with asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or lung disease risk illness causing hospitalization, and sadly, sometimes death. Pregnant women who catch the flu risk delivering their baby early, which can increase the chance of birth defects. These groups have more chance of serious complications. But anyone can get the flu and become very sick or even die.

### The flu vaccine is safe.

For more than 50 years, hundreds of millions of people have gotten flu vaccines. Each year, the CDC works closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other partners to ensure the highest safety standards for flu vaccines.

### The most common side effects of flu vaccines are mild.

The flu vaccine can sometimes cause mild side effects. The most common side effects are soreness, tenderness, redness, or swelling at the spot where you had the shot. With the nasal spray flu vaccine, the most common side effects are stuffy nose and sore throat. Some people may get a headache, muscle aches, fever, or nausea, or feel tired after getting the flu vaccine. These side effects are usually mild and last only 1-2 days. These side effects are not the flu. Flu vaccines can't give you the flu.

**Getting vaccinated each year provides the best protection against flu throughout the flu season.**

When you get the flu vaccine, your body starts to make antibodies that help protect you against the flu. It takes about two weeks to make these antibodies.

You may hear people say that they got the flu even though they got the flu vaccine. In some cases, they might have caught the flu soon after getting vaccinated, before the antibodies were able to protect them. If you happen to get the flu even though you were vaccinated against it, the flu vaccine may help make your flu illness milder.

**The flu vaccine cannot protect you from viruses that are not the flu.**

Many viruses have symptoms that seem like flu – but they're not the flu. The flu vaccine can only prevent illnesses caused by seasonal flu viruses that are included in the vaccine. It cannot protect against non-flu viruses that may cause flu-like illness.

**Flu vaccines are the best tool available to protect against flu.**

Each year, scientists develop vaccines that protect against the flu viruses that will cause the most disease. Sometimes there are flu viruses going around that were not included in the vaccine.

Unfortunately, the flu vaccine doesn't provide the same protection for everyone. How well the flu vaccine works (or its ability to prevent flu) can range widely from season to season and also can vary depending on who is being vaccinated.

**Get vaccinated before flu begins to spread.**

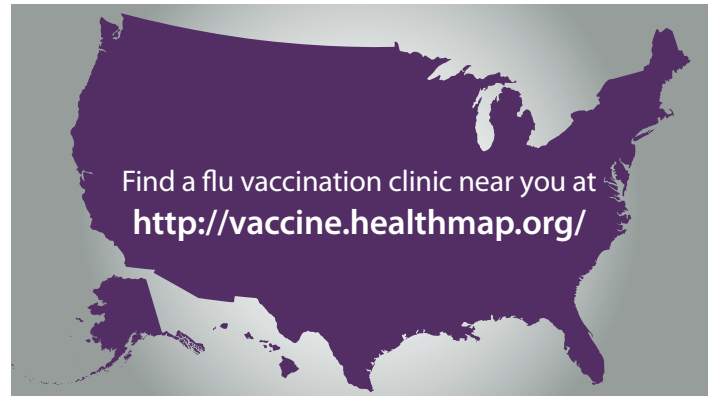
Since it takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to provide protection for you, you should get vaccinated soon after vaccine is available. If by January you have not yet been vaccinated against the flu, you should do so as soon as possible.



Prevent flu. Get vaccinated.

**Flu vaccines are offered in many locations.**

Even if you don't have a regular doctor or nurse, you can get a flu vaccine. Some options are health departments, pharmacies, retail stores, health centers, doctor's offices, and clinics. Many employers and schools also offer flu vaccines.

**Don't avoid getting a flu vaccine because you don't like shots.**

The very minor pain of a flu shot is nothing compared to the suffering that can be caused by the flu. The flu can make you very sick for several days, send you to the hospital, or worse.

A nasal spray option is available for those 2-49 years old who aren't pregnant.

**You need to get a flu vaccine every year.**

You need to get a flu vaccine every year to protect yourself against the flu viruses that research suggests are most likely to circulate each season. There are two reasons for getting a flu vaccine every year:

The first reason is that flu viruses are constantly changing. This means that flu vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the viruses research indicates may be most common during the upcoming flu season.

The second reason is that a person's immune protection from the vaccine declines over time. Annual vaccination gives the best protection.

For more information, visit <http://www.address.here> or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).