



Seasonal Influenza (Flu)

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Key Facts About Seasonal Flu Vaccine

There are two types of vaccines:

- 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.

The single best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated each year.

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.

Seasonal flu vaccines protect against the three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season. The viruses in the vaccine can change each year based on international surveillance and scientists' estimations about which types and strains of viruses will circulate in a given year. About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against the influenza viruses in the vaccine develop in the body. Information specific to the 2011-2012 season, including the vaccine formulation, can be found at [2011-2012 Flu Season](#).

When to Get Vaccinated

CDC recommends that people get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as vaccine becomes available in their community. Vaccination before December is best since this timing ensures that protective antibodies are in place before flu activity is typically at its highest. CDC continues to encourage people to get vaccinated throughout the flu season, which can begin as early as October and last as late as May. Over the course of the flu season, many different influenza viruses can circulate at

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different times and in different places. As long as flu viruses are still spreading in the community, vaccination can provide protective benefit.

Where to Get Vaccinated

Flu vaccine shipments began in August and will continue throughout September and October until all vaccine is distributed. Doctors and nurses are encouraged to begin vaccinating their patients as soon as flu vaccine is available in their area, even as early as August. See your doctor or nurse to get the flu vaccine, or seek out other locations where vaccine is being offered. The following [Flu Vaccine Locator](#) is a useful tool for finding vaccine in your area.



Who Should Get Vaccinated

[On February 24, 2010 vaccine experts voted](#) that everyone 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine each year starting with the 2010-2011 influenza season. [CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) voted for "universal" flu vaccination in the U.S. to expand protection against the flu to more people.

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:

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

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Use of the Nasal Spray Flu Vaccine

It should be noted that vaccination with the nasal-spray flu vaccine is always an option for healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.*

Who Should Not Be Vaccinated

There are some people who should not get a flu vaccine without first consulting a physician. These include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- Children younger than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group), and
- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated.)
- People with a history of [Guillain–Barré Syndrome](#) (a severe paralytic illness, also called GBS) that occurred after receiving influenza vaccine and who are not at risk for severe illness from influenza should generally not receive vaccine. Tell your doctor if you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome. Your doctor will help you decide whether the vaccine is recommended for you.

Vaccine Effectiveness

The ability of a flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine, and the similarity or “match” between the viruses or virus in the vaccine and those in circulation. For more information about vaccine effectiveness see [How Well Do Flu Vaccines Work?](#)

Vaccine Side Effects (What to Expect)

Different side effects can be associated with the flu shot and LAIV.

The flu shot: The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Almost all people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. However, on rare occasions, flu vaccination can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. As of July 1, 2005, people who think that they have been injured by the flu shot can file a claim for compensation from the [National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program \(VICP\)](#).

The nasal spray (also called LAIV or FluMist®): The viruses in the nasal-spray vaccine are weakened and do not cause severe symptoms often associated with influenza illness. (In clinical studies, transmission of vaccine viruses to close contacts has occurred only rarely.)

In children, side effects from LAIV (FluMist®) can include:

- runny nose
- wheezing
- headache
- vomiting
- muscle aches
- fever

In adults, side effects from LAIV (FluMist®) can include

- runny nose
- headache
- sore throat
- cough

More information about the safety of flu vaccines is available at [Influenza Vaccine Safety](#).

Flu Clinic Locations Open To The Public

- [Flu Vaccine Locator](#) 

* "Healthy" indicates persons who do not have an underlying medical condition that predisposes them to influenza complications.

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