

A Strong Defense Against Flu: Get Vaccinated!

FIGHT FLU



The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against influenza (flu) is to get a flu vaccine every flu season. Flu is a contagious respiratory disease that can lead to serious illness, hospitalization, or even death. CDC recommends everyone six months and older get an annual flu vaccine.

What are some key reasons to get a flu vaccine?

- Every year, flu vaccination prevents illnesses, medical visits, hospitalizations, and deaths.
- Flu vaccination also is an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions. For example flu vaccination has been associated with lower rates of some cardiac events among in people with heart disease.
- Vaccinating pregnant women helps protect them from flu illness and hospitalization, and also has been shown to help protect the baby from flu infection for several months after birth, before the baby can be vaccinated.
- A [2017](#) study showed that flu vaccine can be life-saving in children.
- While some people who get vaccinated still get sick, flu vaccination has been shown in several studies to reduce severity of illness.



Why is it important to get a flu vaccine EVERY year?

- Flu viruses are constantly changing, so flu vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the viruses that research suggests will be common during the upcoming flu season.
- Your protection from a flu vaccine declines over time. Yearly vaccination is needed for the best protection.



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What kinds of flu vaccines are recommended?

There are several licensed and recommended flu vaccine options this season:

- [Standard dose flu shots made from virus grown in eggs.](#)
- [Shots made with adjuvant and high dose](#) for older adults.
- [Shots made with virus grown in cell culture instead of eggs.](#)
- Shots made using a [recombinant vaccine production technology](#) that does not require the use of a flu virus.
- [Live attenuated influenza vaccine \(LAIV, the nasal spray vaccine\)](#), which is made with live, weakened influenza viruses. It is an option for people 2 through 49 years of age who are not pregnant.



Is the flu vaccine safe?

Flu vaccines have a good safety record. Hundreds of millions of Americans have safely received flu vaccines over the past 50 years. Extensive research supports the safety of seasonal flu vaccines. Each year, CDC works with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other partners to ensure the highest safety standards for flu vaccines. More information about the safety of flu vaccines is available at www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/vaccinesafety.htm.

What are the side effects of flu vaccines?

Flu shots: Flu shots are made using killed flu viruses (for inactivated vaccines), or without flu virus at all (for the recombinant vaccine). So, you cannot get flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that may occur include soreness, redness and/or swelling where the shot was given, low grade fever, and aches.

Nasal spray flu vaccines: The viruses in nasal spray flu vaccines are weakened and do not cause the severe symptoms often associated with influenza illness. For adults, side effects from the nasal spray may include runny nose, headache, sore throat, and cough. For children, side effects may also include wheezing, vomiting, muscle aches, and fever.

If these problems occur, they are usually mild and go away on their own, but serious reactions are also possible. Almost all people who receive flu vaccine have no serious problems from it.

When and Where to get vaccinated?

You should get a flu vaccine by the end of October. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating, vaccination should continue throughout flu season, even in January or later.

Flu vaccines are offered in many doctors' offices and clinics. Flu vaccine is available in many other locations, including health departments, pharmacies, urgent care clinics, health centers, and travel clinics. Vaccines may also be offered at your school, college health center, or workplace. Visit: www.vaccinefinder.org at to find a flu vaccination clinic near you.

For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/flu or call **1-800-CDC-INFO**

Influenza Vaccine: Who Should Get It, and Who Should Not

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Everyone 6 months and older is recommended for annual influenza vaccination, with rare exceptions. **For the 2020-2021 flu season, ACIP recommends annual influenza vaccination for everyone 6 months and older with any licensed, appropriate influenza vaccine (IIV, RIV4, LAIV4, or nasal spray) with no preference expressed for any one vaccine over another. Some vaccines are not recommended in some situations and for people of certain ages or with certain health conditions, and some people should not receive influenza vaccines at all (though this is uncommon).**

Different flu shots are approved for people of different ages. Everyone should get a vaccine that is appropriate for their age.

Influenza (Flu) Shots

People who can get a flu shot

- There are inactivated injectable influenza vaccines (flu shots) that are approved for people as young as 6 months of age.
- Some vaccines are only approved for adults. As examples, the recombinant influenza vaccine is approved for people aged 18 years and older, and the adjuvanted and high-dose inactivated vaccines are approved for people aged 65 years and older.
- Flu shots are recommended for pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions.
- Most people with an egg allergy can get a flu shot.

People who SHOULD NOT get a flu shot

- Children younger than 6 months of age are too young to get a flu shot.
- People with severe, life-threatening allergies to flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine. This might include gelatin, antibiotics, or other ingredients. See special considerations regarding egg allergy for more information about egg allergies and flu vaccine.

People who should talk to their doctor before getting a flu shot:

If you have one of the following conditions, talk with your healthcare provider. He or she can help decide whether vaccination is right for you, and help select the best vaccine for your situation:

- If you have an allergy to eggs or any of the ingredients in the vaccine. Talk to your doctor about your allergy. See special considerations regarding egg allergy at the bottom of this document for more information about egg allergies and flu vaccine.
- If you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralyzing illness, also called GBS). Some people with a history of GBS should not get this vaccine. Talk to your doctor about your GBS history.
- If you are not feeling well, talk to your doctor about your symptoms.

For more information, visit:
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or call **1-800-CDC-INFO**



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Nasal Spray Flu Vaccine:

People who can get a nasal spray flu vaccine:

Nasal spray vaccine is approved for use healthy non-pregnant individuals, 2 years through 49 years of age.

People who SHOULD NOT get a nasal spray vaccine:

- Children younger than 2 years.
- Adults 50 years and older.
- Pregnant women.
- People with severe, life-threatening allergies to flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine.
- Children 2 years through 17 years of age who are receiving aspirin- or salicylate-containing medications.
- People with weakened immune systems (immunosuppression).
- Children 2 years through 4 years who have asthma or who have had a history of wheezing in the past 12 months.
- People who have taken influenza antiviral drugs within the previous 48 hours.
- People who care for severely immunocompromised persons who require a protected environment (or otherwise avoid contact with those persons for 7 days after getting a nasal spray vaccine).

People who should talk to their healthcare provider before getting a nasal spray vaccine:

If you have one of the following conditions, talk with your healthcare provider. He or she can help decide whether vaccination is right for you, and select the best vaccine for your situation:

- People with asthma aged 5 years and older.
- People with other underlying medical conditions that can put them at higher risk of serious flu complications. These include conditions such as chronic lung diseases, heart disease (except isolated hypertension), kidney disease, liver disorders, neurologic and neuromuscular disorders, blood disorders, or metabolic disorders (such as diabetes).
- People with moderate or severe acute illness with or without fever.
- People with Guillain-Barré Syndrome after a previous dose of influenza vaccine.

Special Consideration Regarding Egg Allergy

People with egg allergies can receive any licensed, recommended age-appropriate influenza vaccine (IIV, RIV4, or LAIV4) that is otherwise appropriate. People who have a history of severe egg allergy (those who have had any symptom other than hives after exposure to egg) should be vaccinated in a medical setting, supervised by a health care provider who is able to recognize and manage severe allergic reactions. Two completely egg-free (ovalbumin-free) flu vaccine options are available: quadrivalent recombinant vaccine and quadrivalent cell-based vaccine.

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