



Vaccines against Seasonal Influenza What You Need to Know

Who should get a seasonal influenza vaccine?

Everyone six months of age and older should get vaccinated against seasonal influenza. For people in these groups, it is especially important to be vaccinated every year:

- Pregnant women
- All health care workers
- Anyone 6 months through 18 years of age
- Anyone 19 through 49 years of age who has an underlying health condition that increases the risk of complications from influenza (see box)
- Adults 50 and older
- Anyone who lives with or cares for children less than five years old, especially infants younger than 6 months
- People living in nursing homes or other care facilities
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives

Health conditions that increase the risk of influenza complications

- Asthma and other chronic respiratory conditions
- Heart, kidney or liver disease
- Hematologic diseases, such as sick cell anemia
- Metabolic disorders, such as diabetes
- Weakened immune system, from illness or medication
- Neuromuscular disorders that interfere with breathing or the discharge of mucus
- Pregnancy
- Long-term aspirin therapy in people under 19
- People who are very overweight (a Body Mass Index of 40 and over)

What if I want to get the seasonal flu vaccine but I am not in one of the groups mentioned here?

Anyone concerned about being ill with influenza and transmitting it to others should get the seasonal influenza vaccine. People between the ages of 19 and 49 can receive the

vaccine by injection or in a nasal spray called [FluMist® \(PDF\)](#). See your health care provider to determine which is best for you.

When should I get my influenza vaccine(s)?

Influenza viruses are always changing. To maintain your protection, you need a different vaccine each year. The vaccine starts to protect you after one to two weeks. Influenza is most common in the United States from December to April. It is best to get vaccinated in the fall, but you can be vaccinated through late spring. Some children less than 9 years old will need two shots (given at least four weeks apart) if they are being vaccinated for the first time.

Will the vaccine keep me from getting influenza this year?

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against several of the most common strains of flu that will appear this fall. Because new influenza viruses appear every year, the effectiveness of the vaccine varies from one year to the next. But even when a vaccine doesn't provide complete protection, people who are vaccinated tend to experience milder illness, and less hospitalization, than others. Also, other viruses might cause symptoms that seem like influenza, and the influenza vaccine does not protect against these infections. All the viruses in the vaccine are killed so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

Can other vaccines be given at the same visit?

Yes, children can receive all routinely scheduled vaccines along with the flu shot.

What are the risks from influenza vaccine?

As with any medicine, there is a very small chance that serious problems, even death, could occur after taking the vaccine. The risk from the vaccine is much smaller than the risk from the disease. Serious problems from the flu vaccine are extremely rare. If a vaccine causes side effects, they usually start soon after the vaccination and usually last one to two days. These may include:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever
- Aches

Tell your doctor or nurse if you:

- Have a serious allergy to eggs
- Ever had a serious allergic reaction or other problem after getting influenza vaccine

- Were ever paralyzed with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (which was linked to the swine flu vaccine in 1976 but has not been clearly linked to flu vaccinations since then)
- Have a moderate or severe illness

What to do in the rare event someone experiences a serious reaction:

- Call a doctor or get the person to a doctor right away.
- Write down what happened and the date and time it happened.
- Ask the health care provider or health department to file a Vaccine Adverse Event Report form (vaers.hhs.gov, 800-822-7967, or 347-396-2400).

For additional information or to find out where you can get your flu vaccine, call the toll-free NYC Department of Health's Flu Vaccination Information Line at 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/flu.