



Influenza Vaccine - Inactivated

Why get vaccinated?

Influenza (“flu”) is a very contagious disease.

It is caused by the influenza virus, which spreads from infected persons to the nose or throat of others.

Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu;
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and;
- About 36,000 people die from flu.

Anyone can get influenza. For most people, it lasts only a few days. It can cause:

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------------|-------------|----------|--------------|
| Fever | Chills | Fatigue | Headache | Muscle aches |
| Cough | Runny or stuffy nose | Sore throat | | |

Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, are more common in children

Some people get much sicker. Influenza can lead to pneumonia and dehydration which can be dangerous. It can cause high fever and seizures in children. Children may get sinus problems and ear infections.

How Flu Spreads

Flu viruses spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. They usually spread from person to person, though sometimes people become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 days **after** becoming sick. **That means that you can pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.**

Influenza vaccine can prevent influenza.

Inactivated influenza vaccine.

Influenza viruses are constantly changing. Therefore, influenza vaccines are updated every year, and an annual vaccination is recommended.

For most people influenza vaccine prevents serious illness caused by the influenza virus. It will not prevent “influenza-like” illnesses caused by other viruses.

It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after the shot, and protection can last up to a year.

TRAVEL VACCINATION CENTER

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3. Who should get inactivated influenza vaccine?

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. Influenza vaccine can be given to people 6 months of age and older.

People at high risk for complications from influenza:

- All children 6 through 23 months of age.
- People who have long-term health problems with:
 - Heart disease
 - Lung disease
 - Asthma
 - Kidney disease
 - Metabolic disease, such as diabetes
 - Anemia, and other blood disorders
- People with certain muscle or nerve disorders (such as seizure disorders or severe cerebral palsy) that can lead to breathing or swallowing problems.
- People with a weakened immune system due to:
 - H.I.V. A.I.D.S. or other diseases affecting the immune system
 - Long-term treatment with drugs such as steroids
 - Cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs
- People 6 months to 18 years of age on long-term aspirin treatment (these people could develop Reye Syndrome if they got influenza).
- Women who will be pregnant during influenza season.

People who can spread influenza to those at high risk:

- Household contacts and out-of-home caretakers of infants from 0 through 23 months of age.
- People living in dormitories or under other crowded conditions, to prevent outbreaks.

4. When should I get influenza vaccine?

The best time to get influenza vaccine is in October or November.

Influenza season usually peaks in February, but it can peak any time from November through May. So getting the vaccine in December, or even later, can be beneficial in most years.

Most people need one flu shot each year. Children younger than 9 years of age getting influenza vaccine for the first time should get 2 doses, given at least one month apart.

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5. Some people should talk with a doctor before getting influenza vaccine.

- Tell us if you have any severe (life-threatening) allergies. Allergic reactions to influenza vaccine are rare.
 - Influenza vaccine virus is grown in eggs. People with a severe egg allergy should not get the vaccine.
 - A severe allergy to any vaccine component is also a reason to not get the vaccine.
 - If you have had a severe reaction after a previous dose of influenza vaccine, tell us.
 - Tell us if you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness, also called G.B.S.)
- People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting flu vaccine.

6. Can I get the flu even though I got a flu vaccine this year?

Yes. The ability of flu vaccine to protect a person depends on two things: 1) the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine, and 2) the similarity or "match" between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation.

7. Why do I need to get vaccinated against the flu every year?

Flu viruses change from year to year, which means two things. First, you can get the flu more than once during your lifetime. The immunity (natural protection that develops against a disease after a person has had that disease) that is built up from having the flu caused by one virus strain doesn't always provide protection when a new strain is circulating. Second, a vaccine made against flu viruses circulating last year may not protect against the newer viruses. That is why the influenza vaccine is updated to include current viruses every year.

Another reason to get flu vaccine every year is that after you get vaccinated, your immunity to the disease declines over time and may be too low to provide protection after one year.

8. What are the risks from inactivated influenza vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is **extremely small**.

Serious problems from influenza vaccine are very rare. The viruses in inactivated influenza vaccine have been killed, so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

Mild problems:

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

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If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1 to 2 days.

Severe problems:

- Life-threatening allergic reactions from vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it is within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot.
- In 1976, a certain type of influenza (swine flu) vaccine was associated with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (G.B.S.). Since then, flu vaccines have not been clearly linked to G.B.S. However, if there is a risk of G.B.S. from current flu vaccines, it would be no more than 1 or 2 cases per million people vaccinated. This is much lower than the risk of severe influenza, which can be prevented by vaccination.

9. What if there is a severe reaction?

- Any unusual condition, such as a high fever or behavior changes. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

What should I do?

- Call a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away. Tell us what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- Ask your doctor, Or you can file Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form. through the VAERS web site at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling 1-800-822-7967.
- In the event that you or your child has a serious reaction to a vaccine, a federal program has been created to help pay for the care of those who have been harmed.

For details about the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, call 1-800-338-2382 or visit their website at www.hrsa.gov/osp/vicp.

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