

# No More Excuses: You Need a Flu Vaccine

## Get the Facts

- The flu vaccine is safe, does not cause the flu, and can protect the ones you love.
- Spread the word and **GET VACCINATED!**



### **Even healthy people need a flu vaccine.**

Influenza (flu) is a contagious disease which affects the lungs and can lead to serious illness, including pneumonia. Even healthy people can get sick enough to miss work or school for a significant amount of time or even be hospitalized. The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. Pregnant women, young children, older people, and people with certain chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart disease are at increased risk of serious flu-related complications, so getting a yearly flu vaccine is especially important for them.

### **Is the flu vaccine safe?**

Yes. The flu vaccine is safe. They have been given to hundreds of millions of people for more than 50 years and have a very good safety track record. Each year, 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 cannot cause flu illness; however, it can cause mild side effects that may be mistaken for flu. For example, people vaccinated with the flu shot may feel achy and may have a sore arm where the shot was given. People vaccinated with the nasal spray flu vaccine may have a stuffy nose and sore throat. These side effects are NOT the flu. If experienced at all, these effects are usually mild and last only 1-2 days.

### **Even if I get sick, won't I recover quickly?**

Not necessarily. Influenza can be serious and anyone can become sick with flu and experience serious complications. But even if you bounce back quickly, others around you might not be so lucky. Older people, young children, pregnant women and people with medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease and lung disease are at especially high risk from the flu. Kids, teens and adults who are active and healthy also can get very sick from flu and spread it to others. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, you can still spread the virus to others. Don't be the one spreading flu to those you care about.

## Can't I wait and get vaccinated when/if flu hits my community?

It is best to get vaccinated before flu begins to spread. It takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to provide full protection, so the sooner you get vaccinated, the more likely it is that you will be fully protected once flu begins to circulate in your community.

## Flu vaccines can't give you the flu.

Even if you got a flu vaccine, there are reasons why you might still get flu or a flu-like illness.

- You may have been exposed to a non-flu virus before or after you got vaccinated. The flu vaccine can only prevent illnesses caused by flu viruses. It cannot protect against non-flu viruses that may cause flu-like illness.
- Or you might have been exposed to flu after you got vaccinated but before the vaccine took effect. It takes about two weeks after you receive the vaccine for your body to build protection against the flu.
- Or you may have been exposed to an influenza virus that was very different from the viruses included in that year's vaccine. The flu vaccine protects against the influenza viruses that research indicates will cause the most disease during the upcoming season, but there can be other flu viruses circulating.
- 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.

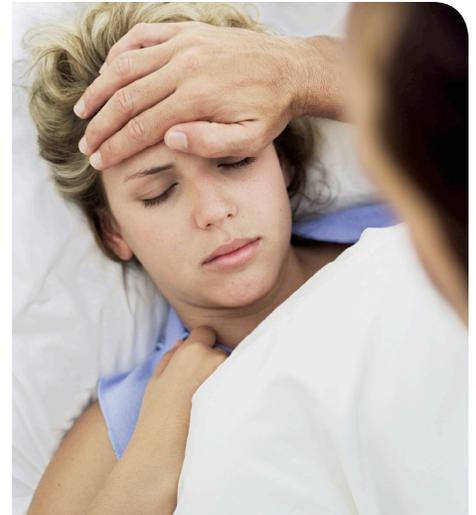
## Don't avoid getting a flu vaccine because you don't like shots.

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. For most healthy, non-pregnant people ages 2 through 49 years old, the nasal spray flu vaccine is a great choice for those who don't like shots. Also, there is an intradermal shot that uses a much smaller needle than the regular flu shot. Either way, getting the shot or nasal spray can help to protect you from catching the flu. So, whatever little discomfort you feel from the minor side effects of the flu vaccine is worthwhile to avoid the flu.

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

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

- a) The first reason is that because flu viruses are constantly changing, 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.
- b) The second reason that annual vaccination is recommended is that a person's immune protection from the vaccine declines over time. Annual vaccination is needed for optimal protection.



## Get a Flu Vaccine

- Flu vaccines are offered in many locations. Even if you don't have a regular doctor or nurse, you can get a flu vaccine somewhere else including: doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, retail stores, pharmacies, health centers, as well as by many employers and schools.
- Use the vaccine finder at <http://vaccine.healthmap.org/> to find a flu vaccination clinic near you.



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