

A Flu Fighter's Checklist

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. Here are some steps you can take to reduce your chances of getting the flu:



1. Get the flu shot!

A flu vaccine is the best option for preventing illness from influenza.

2. Frequently wash your hands and/or use hand hygiene products.

Wash with soap and under clean running water for 15 seconds or rub hands vigorously with an alcohol-based gel or foam hand rub.

3. Use Respiratory Disease Etiquette.

Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze into the crux of your arm or into a tissue. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth which are vulnerable ports of entry for the virus.

4. Keep your distance.

Influenza is highly contagious. It is spread by contact with respiratory secretions (coughing, sneezing, touching contaminated items, sharing beverages, utensils, etc.).

- Limit close contacts.
- Don't come to work if you have flu symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches).
- Wear proper personal protective equipment when working with sick patients.
- Distance yourself and family from crowds. during the flu season, cleaning your hands frequently when in public places.

5. Educate your family, friends and co-workers about the flu and its effects.

6. Clean things that are touched frequently such as doorknobs, phones, keyboards, etc.

7. Eat a balanced diet, get proper amounts of sleep and exercise regularly.

Fighting the Flu



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TIPS TO PREVENT INFLUENZA INFECTION





An annual flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting yourself against influenza.

ABOUT THE FLU VACCINE

There are two types of flu 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 nasal-spray flu vaccine — a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for “live attenuated influenza vaccine” or FluMist). LAIV (FluMist) is approved for use in healthy people 2 to 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

WHEN TO GET VACCINATED

Annual flu vaccination should begin in the early fall or as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season into December, January and beyond. Influenza activity typically peaks in January or later.

VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

The ability of a flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person receiving the vaccine, and the similarity or “match” between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation. Testing has shown that both the flu shot and the nasal-spray vaccine are effective at preventing the flu.

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED

1. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday.
2. Pregnant women.
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:
 - Health care workers.

- Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu.
- Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated).

WHO SHOULD NOT GET VACCINATED

There are some people who should not be vaccinated 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.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine.
- Children less 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 (get vaccinated after recovery).

VACCINATION SIDE EFFECTS

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

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, a low grade fever or aches.

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last 1 to 2 days. Almost all people who receive the 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).