

What you should know about . . . Inactivated Influenza Vaccine

1 What is influenza?

Influenza (“flu”) is a serious disease that is caused by a virus. Anyone can get influenza. It is contagious and can cause:

- Fever, chills
- Sore throat, cough
- Headache, muscle aches
- Death

Most people who get it will be sick for a few days. But some people get very sick and may need to stay in the hospital. About 36,000 Americans (mostly elderly) die every year because of influenza.

2 Is there a vaccine?



Yes. The influenza vaccine comes in **shot** and **nasal spray** form. This sheet is about the **shot**.

The flu shot will start protecting you in about 2 weeks and may last up to a year.

Even if you get the vaccine, you may still get the flu. But, you will probably get a milder case.

3 Who should get the flu shot?

These people should get the flu shot every year:

- All children 6–23 months old.
- Any child 6 months – 18 years on long-term aspirin treatment.
- People who live with or take care of children 0–23 months old.
- Adults 50 years, or older.
- People who live or work in long-term care facilities.

- People with chronic health problems, like:
 - Heart, kidney, or lung disease
 - Asthma, diabetes, anemia, and other blood disorders
- People with weak immune systems because of:
 - HIV/AIDS
 - Long-term steroid treatment
 - Cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs
- Women pregnant during flu season.
- Doctors, nurses, family members, or anyone in close contact with people who are at risk of getting very sick from the flu.

Others who should consider getting the flu shot include people who:

- Provide essential community services.
- Live in a dorm or other crowded situation.
- People who are at high risk *and* travel to the Southern hemisphere between April and September, or to the tropics any time, or travel or work with organized tourist groups.

4 When should I get a flu shot?

Most people can get their flu shot in October or November, or even later, depending on how long the flu season lasts.

But, some people should get vaccinated in *October* or earlier, including:

- Adults 50 years, or older
- All children 6–23 months old
- Children under 9 years getting the flu shot for the *first* time
- People at high risk from flu and anyone who lives or works in their home
- Health care workers

5 How often do I need a flu shot?

Once a year, for most of us. But children under 9 years who have never had the flu vaccine (nasal spray or shot) before, need 2 doses, several weeks apart.

Children who got a flu vaccine last year (nasal spray or shot) only need 1 dose this year.

6 Should I talk to a doctor before getting a flu shot?

Talk with a doctor first if you have:

- Ever had a serious allergic reaction to eggs or to a previous influenza vaccine, or
- A history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), or
- A fever or are very sick when you come to get your shot. The doctor or nurse may ask you to come back when you are better.

7 Are there risks from this vaccine?

Yes. A vaccine, like any medicine, has risks. But with the influenza vaccine, the risks are extremely rare. And, since the virus in this vaccine is “killed,” you cannot get influenza from this vaccine.

Mild problems:

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

They sometimes occur soon after the shot and last 1-2 days.

Serious problems are very rare. Watch for signs of a serious allergic reaction or anything unusual, like:

- High fever or behavior changes,
- Difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing,
- Hives, paleness, weakness, fast heartbeat or dizziness.

These would happen within a few hours after the shot.

8 What if there is a serious reaction?

- **Call** a doctor, or get the person to the doctor right away.
- **Tell** the doctor what happened and when. Say when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask** the doctor, nurse, or health department to file a report with the *Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System* (VAERS).

Or you can file this report at www.vaers.org, or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

VAERS does not give medical advice.



How can I learn more?

- Ask your doctor or nurse. They can give you the vaccine package insert or other information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
1-800-232-2522 (English)
1-800-232-0233 (Español)
- Or visit CDC websites:
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm
www.cdc.gov/nip