

Flu shot 2020 – 2021

Please read the handout before getting your flu shot. If you would like, ask your nurse, pharmacist or doctor to review or read the information with you. If you have any questions or concerns about the flu shot, please ask.

What is the flu shot?

The flu shot is a vaccine that helps protect against getting the flu (influenza). The shot is given in the muscle in the upper arm.

Why should I get a flu shot?

The flu is an infection caused by a virus. People with the flu quickly become ill with a cough, fever, chills, sore throat, headache, muscle aches and tiredness. Most people are sick for 5 to 7 days, although the cough may last for weeks. In some people, the flu can lead to pneumonia, hospitalization and death.

The flu spreads easily from infected persons to others through coughing and sneezing. It can also be picked up through direct contact with surfaces and objects, like unwashed hands and toys.

The vaccine works by causing your body to produce its own protection against the flu. The flu shot can prevent the flu in most people. It may lessen how ill you feel if you do get the flu. You can protect yourself and your family by getting the flu shot.

How safe is the flu shot?

- The flu shot is considered safe. Serious side effects and allergic reactions can happen but are very rare.
- You cannot get the flu from the vaccine. Minor side effects from the vaccine include: pain and swelling where the shot is given, tiredness, muscle and joint pain, fever and headaches. Most side effects are mild, do not last long and usually go away on their own.
- If you have a bleeding disorder or are taking medication (blood thinners) that could affect blood clotting, please discuss your medical situation with your health care provider.

Who should get the flu shot?

Any person over the age of 6 months should get the flu shot.

The flu shot is especially important for a person who are at risk of getting really sick from the flu, such as:

- children 6 months to 5 years old
- people 65 years of age or older
- all pregnant women (and women up to 2 weeks after birth of the baby (s))
- children and adults with chronic health conditions such as:
 - cardiac, pulmonary, renal, neurological or metabolic conditions including diabetes, anemia, hemoglobinopathy, asthma, cystic fibrosis and bronchopulmonary dysplasia
 - cancer
 - children 6 months to 18 years undergoing treatment for long periods with acetylsalicylic acid
 - morbid obesity
- people residing in long term care, nursing homes or other chronic care facilities
- Indigenous peoples

The flu shot is also important for people who live with or care for a person who could get really sick with the flu.

Who should NOT get the flu shot?

Babies less than 6 months of age should **not** get the flu shot.

If you have any of these conditions, please see your doctor before getting a flu shot:

- a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome that developed within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot
- have had severe Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome (ORS) after a past flu shot and needed to be in the hospital
- a serious illness with an infection that started recently, you should wait until you recover before getting a flu shot
- have had an allergic reaction to any flu shot or vaccine



Please tell your nurse, pharmacist or doctor if you have ever had an allergic reaction to any flu shot or vaccine in the past.

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.
Clean your hands.**

