

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine

Influenza—the flu— is an infection, caused by a virus. It makes you feel very sick, often with fever, headache, body aches, and coughing. It usually feels much worse than a cold.

The flu usually comes on suddenly.

Symptoms develop 1 to 4 days after you are infected, and they may include: Fever, which lasts for about 3 days; cough, runny nose, and sore throat; body aches and headache.

You can help prevent the flu by getting a flu vaccine every year, as soon as it is available. The vaccine prevents many cases of the flu. But even if you get the flu, the vaccine can make symptoms less severe and reduce the chance of problems from the flu.

Flu viruses are always changing. Each year's flu vaccine is made to protect against viruses that are likely to cause disease that year.

Everyone age 6 months or older should get a flu vaccine each year, except for people with a fever or those who have had serious problems with vaccines in the past.

The flu vaccine is very important for people who are at high risk for getting other health problems from the flu.

This includes: Anyone 65 years of age or older. Children younger than 2 years old. People who live in a long-term care center, such as a nursing home. People who will be pregnant during the flu season. Adults and children 6 months and older who have long-term health problems, including heart or lung problems, such as asthma. People with a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or medicines. People who have any condition that can make it hard to breathe or swallow (such as a brain injury or muscle disorders).

The vaccine is also important for health care workers and anyone who lives or works with someone at higher risk of problems from the flu.

Along with the vaccine, you can help avoid getting the flu by washing your hands often, keeping your hands away from your face, avoiding close contact with people who are sick, and eating a balanced diet.

The flu (influenza) vaccine saves lives. But sometimes people choose not to get the vaccine because of incorrect information they've heard about the vaccine or the flu.

Whether to get the vaccine or not is a choice that only you can make. But it's about more than just you.

Chances are, you're part of a family or community. And this group may include people for whom the flu could be serious or deadly.

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This might be a new grandchild, a beloved aunt, or a good friend who has a chronic disease. If you get the flu, you could spread it to others.

By choosing to get the vaccine, you're helping to protect those you care about as well as yourself.