



All About the Flu Vaccine

What is the flu?

The flu is a serious illness that affects the nose, throat, and lungs. It is caused by the “influenza” virus. That is where the flu gets its name.

How can I protect myself?

The best way is to get a flu *vaccine*. The vaccine is usually a shot, but not always. Sometimes the vaccine is given as a spray up the nose or through something called a *jet injector* that does not use a needle. No matter how you get it, the flu vaccine helps your body protect itself from the virus.

Can the flu vaccine make me sick?

No, you can’t get the flu from the flu vaccine.

The flu vaccine is made from dead flu viruses. They can’t make you sick. However, you can still catch the flu right before or right after you get the vaccine. That’s why you should get the vaccine early, before the end of October. The sooner you get it, the better. If you wait too long, your chances of getting the flu go up.

If you get a flu shot, it may cause soreness, redness, or swelling on the arm where it was given. These will go away in a day or two.

Who should get the flu vaccine?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say everyone over 6 months old should get a flu vaccine every year (annually). The virus changes from year to year, and so does the vaccine that protects you. You should be especially sure to get a flu vaccine if ...

- You have high blood sugar, heart disease, heart failure, asthma, or any kind of lung disease.
- You are pregnant.
- You are 65 years old or older.
- You are an American Indian or Alaska Native.

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Who should NOT get a flu vaccine?

You should always talk to your doctor before getting any vaccine. Very few people are not able to get the flu vaccine. Be sure to tell the person giving you a vaccine if you ...

- Have any severe, life-threatening allergies.
- Have any problems with your immune system caused by things like cancer or HIV.
- Have ever had a serious allergic reaction to a flu vaccine in the past.
- Have an allergy to eggs. (Most people with egg allergies can get a flu vaccine but may have to do so in a medical setting, such as a doctor's office or hospital. This way the doctor can watch for any reactions.)
- Have ever had Guillain-Barré syndrome (or GBS).
- Are sick when you are about to get the vaccine.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

You can get a flu vaccine at little or no cost each year during the fall season from places such as:

- Doctors' offices
- Clinics
- Your local health department
- Pharmacies
- Schools
- Churches
- Senior centers

Talk to your doctor about where to get your flu vaccine. Or visit **[cdc.gov/flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu)** to find a vaccine near you.

Is the flu vaccine safe?

Yes, the flu vaccine is safe. In fact, more than a hundred million people get the flu vaccine each year without any problems.

The flu vaccine does not protect you from getting a cold. You can also get a kind of flu that is different from what is in the yearly flu vaccine. But if you got the flu vaccine, it will make the flu less serious than if you didn't get vaccinated at all. Without the flu vaccine, some people who get the flu are at risk for pneumonia, organ failure, and even death! That's why it's important to protect yourself.

This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice.

Source: [cdc.gov/flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu)

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