



Protect Your Health With An Ounce of Prevention: The Flu and Pneumonia Vaccines

What are the flu and pneumonia?

The flu and pneumonia are two serious illnesses that affect the lungs. The flu is caused by the “influenza” virus. That’s where it gets its name. Pneumonia is a lung illness.

Did you know?	More than 100 million people get the flu vaccine each year. You can stay healthy by joining people in your community who get the flu vaccine every fall!
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How can I protect myself?

The best way is to get a *vaccine*. A vaccine is usually a shot, but not always. Sometimes a 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 them, the flu and pneumonia vaccines help your body protect itself.

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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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 few days.

Who should get the pneumonia vaccine?

There are two kinds of pneumonia vaccines.

One is called PCV13. This is for infants and children under 2 years old and all adults over age 65.

The other is called PPSV23. It is for anyone ages 2 to 64 with certain health problems and all adults 65 years of age and older (usually given 6 to 12 months after the PCV13 vaccine).

You should be especially sure to get a pneumonia vaccine if ...

- You have high blood sugar, any kind of lung disease, or heart, kidney or liver disease.
- You have any problems with your immune system caused by things like cancer or HIV.
- Your spleen has been removed or doesn't work.
- You have sickle cell disease.
- You are 65 years old or older.

You may need to get one or more pneumonia vaccines depending on your age, current health, or other factors. Talk to your doctor about what you should have.

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Who should NOT get the flu or pneumonia vaccines?

You should always talk to your doctor before getting any kind of vaccine. Very few people are not able to get the flu and pneumonia vaccines. 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 any 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.)
- Are getting the flu vaccine and have ever had Guillain-Barré syndrome (or GBS) in the past.
- Are sick when you are about to get the vaccine.

Where can I get the flu or pneumonia vaccines?

You can usually get these vaccines 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 vaccines. Or visit **[vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)** to find a vaccine near you.

Are the flu and pneumonia vaccines safe?

Yes, both vaccines are safe. In fact, millions of people get vaccinated 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.

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Without the flu and pneumonia vaccines, some people are at risk for lung damage, organ failure, and even death! That's why it's important to protect yourself.

Side effects from the flu or pneumonia vaccines are rare. The place where you get a shot may be sore, or you may get a low fever or muscle aches. These will go away in a day or two. Talk to your doctor about any questions you have.

This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice.

Sources: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), [cdc.gov/flu](https://www.cdc.gov/flu), [nhlbi.nih.gov](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov), and [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

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