

Flu Vaccine FAQs



Who should get the flu vaccine?

Everyone 6 months and older who do not have any contraindications, like a severe (life threatening) allergy to a prior dose of a flu vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) especially recommends the vaccine for those at increased risk for flu-related complications including: children under 5, adults over 50, pregnant women, and those with chronic health conditions (lung, heart, kidney, liver, diabetes or cancer). It is important to get the vaccine if you, someone you live with, or someone you care for is at higher risk for flu-related complications. Please ask your health care provider if you have more questions about whether or not you should receive the vaccine.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

The annual effectiveness of the vaccine has generally ranged between 20 and 60 percent. Even though some people may still get the flu after receiving the vaccine, people who receive the flu vaccine usually have milder symptoms and are significantly less likely to be hospitalized by 57 to 74 percent. This is especially important for people with weaker immune systems.

When should I get the vaccine?

Before the end of October, if possible. Flu season usually peaks in January or February, but it can peak earlier or later. Early immunization is the most effective, but it is not too late to get the vaccine in December or later.

How long is my flu vaccine good for?

One flu season. Each season the vaccine is formulated to work against the strains of flu that are expected to circulate that season. This is why you should get a new vaccine each year.

Does the flu vaccine work right away?

No. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in your body and provide protection against the flu virus. In the meantime, you are still at risk for getting the flu. This is why it is better to get vaccinated early in the fall before the flu season.

Is the vaccine safe?

The flu vaccine has a very good safety record. Although there are possible side-effects to vaccination, the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration closely monitor the safety of seasonal flu vaccines.



What are the side effects that could occur?

Common side effects from the flu shot include:

- Short term (1–2 days) soreness, redness, and/or swelling from the shot
- As with any shot or medical procedure, some people may have a risk of fainting
- Some people may experience symptoms of an immune system response to the vaccine, including headache, fever, nausea and muscle aches. However, since the flu vaccine contains an inactivated virus, it cannot cause the flu.

Extremely *rare* allergic reactions (seek medical attention immediately) include breathing problems, hoarseness, hives, fast heartbeat and dizziness.

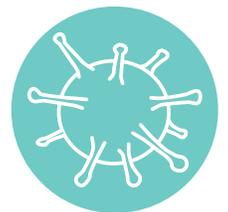
Why is a higher dose flu vaccine available for adults 65 and older?

The human immune system becomes weaker with age, which places older people at greater risk of flu-related complications. A higher dose of antigen in the high-dose vaccine has been demonstrated to stimulate a better immune response and better protection against the flu in those over age 65. A study published in the *New England*

Journal of Medicine indicated that the high-dose vaccine was **24.2% more effective in preventing flu in adults 65 years of age and older than the standard-dose vaccine.**

Is Fluzone High-Dose safe?

The safety profile of Fluzone High-Dose vaccine is similar to that of regular flu vaccines, although some adverse events (which are also reported after regular flu vaccines) were reported more frequently after vaccination with Fluzone High-Dose. The most common adverse events experienced during clinical studies were mild and temporary, and included pain, redness at the injection site, headache, muscle aches and malaise. Most people had minimal or no adverse events after receiving the Fluzone High-Dose vaccine.



Where can I find more information?

Ask your health care provider, or check out the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

More info about the high-dose flu vaccine at: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa_fluzone.htm