

# PSA In Good Health: Influenza (Flu) Vaccine FAQs

FLU SHOTS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR EVERYONE AGES SIX MONTHS AND OLDER.



## Why Should I Get Vaccinated?

Influenza is a potentially serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), millions of people get the flu every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized, and thousands or tens of thousands of people die from flu-related causes every year. An annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to help protect against flu.



## How Do Flu Vaccines Work?

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination. These antibodies provide protection against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine.

Traditional flu vaccines (called “trivalent” vaccines) are made to protect against three flu viruses; an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus, and an influenza B virus.



## Who Should Get Vaccinated This Year?

Everyone six months of age and older should get an influenza (flu) vaccine every season with rare exception.

The following is a list of all the health and age factors that are known to increase a person’s risk of getting serious complications from the flu:

- Pregnant women
- Those 65 years or older
- Young children
- Those with Asthma
- Those with chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cystic fibrosis

- Those with neurologic and neurodevelopment conditions
- Those with blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
- Those with Diabetes
- Those with Heart disease
- Those with Kidney disorders
- Those with Liver disorders
- People who are obese with a body mass index of 40 or higher
- People with a weakened immune system due to disease such HIV/ AIDS and cancer



## When Should I Get Vaccinated?

The best time to be vaccinated is early fall before flu viruses begins spreading in your community, since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against flu. The CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine by the end of November.



## Where Can I Get Vaccinated?

Your Primary Care Doctor likely offers flu vaccine in his/her office. There should be no charge to you. If you don’t have a regular primary care doctor, check your local pharmacy or urgent care center.



## Why Do I Need a Flu Shot Every Year?

A flu vaccine is needed every year for two reasons. First, the body’s immune response from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection. Second, because flu viruses are constantly changing, the formulation of the flu vaccine is reviewed each year and updated as needed to keep up with changing flu viruses.



## Can I Get the Flu Even If I Get the Vaccine?

Yes. It’s possible to get sick with flu even if you have been vaccinated (although you won’t know for sure unless you get a flu test). This is possible for the following reasons:

- You may be exposed to a flu virus shortly before getting vaccinated or during the period that it takes the body to gain protection after getting vaccinated.
- You may be exposed to a flu virus that is not included in the seasonal flu vaccine. There are many different flu viruses that circulate every year. A flu vaccine is made to protect against the three or four flu viruses that research suggests will be most common.
- Unfortunately, some people can become infected with a flu virus a flu vaccine is designed to protect against, despite getting vaccinated. Protection provided by flu vaccination can vary widely, based in part on health and age factors of the person getting vaccinated. Flu vaccination is not a perfect tool, but it is the best way to protect against flu infection.

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