

## Flu: Should I Get a Flu Vaccine?



The flu shot is a vaccine that may keep you from getting the flu. A spray flu vaccine that you breathe in through your nose also is available. Healthy people ages 2 through 49 can usually use this, but women who are pregnant should not use it.

It takes about 2 weeks for the flu vaccine to start working. So it's best to get it as soon as it's available. But the vaccine can still help if you get it during the flu season.

### Key points in making your decision

- Most people get better from the flu without problems. But the flu can lead to serious health problems such as pneumonia or can make an existing disease worse. Every year, the flu puts many people in the hospital.
- A flu vaccine may not always keep you from getting the flu, but it can make the symptoms milder and make it less likely that you will get other health problems from the flu.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone age 6 months or older should get a flu vaccine each year.
- If you take care of someone who is at high risk, it is a good idea to get a flu vaccine. This can lower the chance that you could spread the flu to the person you care for.
- You cannot get the flu from a flu vaccine.

### Who should get a flu vaccine?

The CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months or older should get a flu vaccine each year.

A flu vaccine is especially important for people who are at high risk for getting other health problems from the flu. This includes:

- People who are 50 or older. People 65 or older are most likely to have problems from the flu.
- People who have a long-term disease, such as heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, or lung disease, including asthma.
- People who have a weak immune system or live in nursing homes or care centers.
- Women who are or will be pregnant during flu season.

A flu vaccine is also important for people who could spread the flu to others who are at high risk. This includes:

- Anyone who lives with or cares for a child younger than 5.
- Anyone in close contact with a person who is at high risk for other health problems from the flu.
- Health care workers.

	Get a flu vaccine	Do not get a flu vaccine
<b>What is usually involved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You get a shot in your arm or get a spray into your nose.</li> <li>You get the vaccine at your doctor's office, a health clinic, a drugstore, or any other place that offers it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can take steps to help prevent the flu: Wash your hands often, and keep your hands away from your face.</li> <li>You can avoid people who are sick.</li> </ul>
<b>What are the benefits?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A flu vaccine may keep you from getting the seasonal and H1N1 flu.</li> <li>If you do get the flu, your symptoms may be milder and you may be less likely to get other health problems from the flu.</li> <li>You are less likely to spread the flu to others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You avoid the side effects of the flu vaccine.</li> <li>You do not have to pay for a flu vaccine or take the time to get one.</li> </ul>
<b>What are the risks and side effects?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You might have soreness, redness, and swelling where you got the shot, or a runny nose, sore throat, or a cough if you got the nasal spray. You might have a fever and muscle aches for a day or two. An allergic reaction is possible, but this is rare.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are more likely to get the flu.</li> <li>If you get the flu, you may miss work or school or get other health problems from the flu that you may need to treat in a hospital. You may spend time and money on doctor visits and medicines.</li> </ul>