

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine for Children



The following are common questions and answers about the Influenza (flu) vaccine. Please talk to your child's medical provider if you have other questions or concerns.

What is influenza?

Influenza (commonly known as flu) is an infection caused by the influenza virus. It infects the nose, throat and lungs. Common symptoms of the flu are fever, chills, cough, body aches and headache.

How does the flu spread?

The flu virus spreads mainly through droplets in the air. You can catch flu from people who cough, talk or sneeze around you. The flu can sometimes spread by touching objects that someone sick with the flu also touched. It can be spread easily.

What are the flu symptoms for children who are usually healthy?

Symptoms can include fever and chills, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, cough, headache, and runny or stuffy nose. Some children have more serious complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections, and ear infections.

What if my child has a medical condition like heart disease, cancer, or diabetes?

Having other medical conditions can put your child at risk for more severe symptoms that can be life-threatening.

Is my child at risk?

Yes. Anyone can become very sick from flu—even healthy children.

Why should my child get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is the best way to protect you and your child from getting flu. It is recommended that everyone 6 months of age and older get the flu vaccine. It takes about 1 to 2 weeks after getting the vaccine for the protection to develop.

When should my child get the vaccine?

The best time to get the flu vaccine is before flu season starts. Flu season is every year from October to May.

How do children feel after they get the vaccine?

The way the body responds to the vaccine (also called side effects) can be different from person to person. Most side effects are mild and go away after 1 to 2 days. Symptoms may include:

- Pain, swelling or redness in the area where they received the vaccine
- Fever
- Nausea
- Body aches or fatigue
- People who get the nasal spray vaccine may get a stuffy or runny nose

How old do you have to be to get the vaccine?

You must be 6 months of age or older to receive the vaccine.

Can I get the flu from the flu vaccine?

No. The injectable vaccine and the live nasal spray vaccine cannot cause the flu. Very few people develop flu-like symptoms, such as mild fever and muscle aches, after vaccination. These side effects are not the same as having the actual flu.

Are there different types of flu vaccines?

Yes, there are two types of flu vaccines.

- The flu shot
 - Contains killed flu virus
 - Intramuscular (muscle) injection
 - Can be given to anyone 6 months of age or older
- The nasal spray
 - Contains weakened live flu virus
 - Intranasal (nose) spray
 - Can be given to people ages 2 to 49 years old
 - Some patients with certain medical conditions should not receive the nasal spray

Is the dose different for children?

Children 6 months to 8 years of age may need 2 doses the first time they receive the vaccine. Children over the age of 8 need only 1 dose each flu season. Most children with asthma should get the shot instead of the nasal spray.

Is it OK to get the vaccine with other medications or vaccines?

Yes, the flu vaccine can be given at the same time as other medications or vaccines.

More than half of all children infected with COVID-19 are teens 12 to 18 years. They can have severe, life-threatening symptoms just like adults. Are there reasons my child should not get the flu vaccine?

You should talk to your child's doctor if they have:

- A history of Guillain-Barre syndrome
- Severe allergic reaction to the flu vaccine in the past
- Patients with egg allergy can still get the flu vaccine. Talk to your doctor about specific recommendations for your child.

Patient Family Education

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