

Audience: General Population

CDC: 2016-2017 Flu Season

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Get a Flu Vaccine! It's the Best Way to Help You Fight the Flu This Season

Flu season is approaching. You can protect yourself and your family from the flu this season by getting a flu vaccine. It's the first and most important step to fight the flu.

Influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses, and it can cause mild to severe illness. Each year, millions of people are sickened, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized, and thousands to tens of thousands of people die from flu.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months and older get a flu vaccine every year. The flu vaccine has a number of important benefits. Not only can it reduce flu illness, but it can also reduce doctor's visits and missed work and school due to flu, which leaves you more time to enjoy with family and friends. Importantly, flu vaccine has also been shown to reduce the risk of flu hospitalization.

Flu shots are approved and recommended for everyone 6 months and over, including pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions. However, only some flu shot brands are approved for use in children as young as 6 months of age. There also are high-dose and adjuvanted flu shots designed specifically for [people 65 years and older](#).

This flu season, CDC recommends the use of the inactivated influenza vaccine and the recombinant influenza vaccine, both of which are [injectable seasonal flu vaccines](#). Both trivalent (three-component) and quadrivalent (four-component) flu vaccines are available for the 2016-17 flu season. The nasal spray flu vaccine, sold as FluMist® should not be used this flu season. "There is no preference for one injectable vaccine over another," says Dr. Lisa Grohskopf, a medical officer with CDC's Influenza Division. "The most important thing is that people get a flu shot this season." Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about which flu vaccine is best for you, and visit CDC's [What You Should Know for the 2016-2017 Influenza Season](#) webpage for flu and flu vaccine information specific to the 2016-2017 flu season.

Because flu can cause serious illness, understanding how it spreads and how to prevent it is an important step in keeping yourself and your loved ones protected from flu this season.

Flu spreads from person to person, and experts believe that it's mainly spread by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Although it's less common, you could also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching your nose or mouth. In addition to getting a yearly flu vaccine, you should also take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs. Avoid close contact with sick people, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and wash your hands often with soap and water. CDC's website has additional actions to take to [fight the flu](#).

The flu usually comes on suddenly, and symptoms may include a fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough and sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, and some people may even have

vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults. Most people who get sick from flu will get better in several days to less than two weeks, but some people can develop complications, like pneumonia, as a result of the flu. If you get the flu, antiviral drugs can be used to treat your illness. Visit CDC's website for more information on [what to do if you get sick with the flu](#).

Getting vaccinated against flu is particularly important for people who are at high risk of serious complications from flu. "We know that some people are more likely to get seriously ill if they are infected with flu, including pregnant women, young children, older people and people with certain chronic health conditions," explains Dr. Grohskopf. "We want those people to get vaccinated, but we also want the people around them to get vaccinated to help protect those who are more vulnerable. So your flu vaccine doesn't just protect you, it also protects your infant child or grandchild or your mother or grandmother, for example." See CDC's list of [people at high risk of developing flu-related complications](#) for more information.

Although flu seasons can vary, flu is most common during the fall and winter.

The single best way to prevent flu is to get vaccinated. If you haven't already, get a flu vaccine to protect yourself from flu and to help fight flu this season. Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctor's offices, clinics, health departments, pharmacies and college health centers. They also are offered by many employers, and are even available in some schools. Use the [HealthMap Vaccine Finder](#) to find the nearest location where you and your family or loved ones can get vaccinated.

For more information about flu and the benefits of the flu vaccine, talk to your doctor or other health care professional, visit the CDC flu website (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu>), or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).