

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE FLU AND THE INFLUENZA VACCINE

Influenza, commonly known as “the flu” is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. Most adults are contagious the day before symptoms appear and up to 7 days after they become sick; children may be contagious longer. Symptoms include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, aches, headaches and fatigue.

Seasonal flu shots remain the best protection against the flu. They can lessen the severity of illness for those at risk of complications and for those in close contact with the ill.

Are there two types of influenza vaccine?

Yes. The first type is “inactivated” (contains a dead virus). This vaccine is given by injection and is known as the “flu shot”. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions. The second type is called “live”, attenuated (weakened) and is the influenza vaccine which is sprayed into the nostrils. LAIV or “live attenuated influenza vaccine” or Flu Mist is approved for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

When Should You Get Vaccinated?

Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September, or as soon as the vaccine is available, and continue throughout the flu season, into December, January, and beyond. While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the influenza activity peaks in January or later. It takes 2 weeks for a vaccination to provide full protection and in most cases, once vaccinated, you’ll be immune throughout flu season.

Who Should Get Vaccinated?

The CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices voted for “universal” flu vaccination in the U.S. to expand protection against the flu to more people. While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it is especially important that the following groups get vaccinated.

Pregnant women, children younger than 5, especially younger than 2 years old, people over 50 years of age and older, people with chronic medical conditions and people who live in nursing homes. Health care providers and caregivers of children less than 6 months of age should get vaccinated.

Who Should NOT Get Vaccinated?

People with severe allergies to chicken eggs, children less than 6 months of age, people who have had a severe reaction to the flu vaccine and people who have a moderate-to-severe illness with fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated.)

Vaccine Side Effects (What to Expect)

The vaccine contains a killed (inactivated) virus, so you cannot get the flu from the flu shot. Some minor side effects are: soreness, redness or slight swelling at the injection site, fever (low grade) and aches. These problems usually occur shortly after the shot and usually last 1 – 2 days. Almost everyone who receives the vaccine has no serious complications from it. Flu Mist (live attenuated influenza vaccine) usually does not cause severe symptoms associated with influenza illness, but may cause runny nose, headache, muscle aches, fever and or wheezing.

I had "The Shot" last year...Do I need to get it again?

Most physicians would advise you to get vaccinated yearly. The influenza virus constantly changes and scientists try to adjust the vaccine accordingly.

What should I know about the 2010-2011 Vaccine?

This year's all-in-one vaccination will cover 3 strains of the flu virus:

H3N2, Regular Seasonal A H1N1, and Regular Seasonal B virus.

Information obtained from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Lorain County Medical Society.