



The Flu Vaccine: What you need to know

The flu is a serious disease that could lead to hospitalization or even death for some. Each flu season is different and new vaccines are created to keep up with these rapid changes. An annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and reduce the chances that you will get the flu and spread it to others. The flu shot helps your immune system produce antibodies which help the body fight off the types of inactivated flu virus that are present in the vaccine.

Who needs the flu shot?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend that everyone six months of age or older be vaccinated against the flu. Certain groups of people are at an increased risk for catching the flu and developing complications. According to the CDC, these high-risk individuals include:

- pregnant women;
- children between six months and five years of age;
- men and women over 50;
- anyone living or working in a nursing home or long-term care facility;
- those with chronic medical conditions including asthma, heart and lung problems, neurological conditions, cancer, metabolic diseases, blood conditions, obesity and kidney or liver disease.

Who should not get a flu shot?

Those that cannot get the flu vaccine include children younger than six months and people with severe, life-threatening allergies to flu vaccine or any ingredient in the vaccine. This might include gelatin, antibiotics or other ingredients.

Are there side effects?

Although you **cannot** get the flu from the shot, people may experience some minor side effects, including:

- Soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given
- Low-grade fever
- Aches

Ask your physician to find out if you should get the flu vaccine and which flu shot is best for you.