

## Q: Can the vaccine cause influenza?

**A:** No. The viruses in flu vaccines are either killed (inactivated flu shot) or weakened (attenuated nasal-spray), so you cannot get the flu from a flu vaccine. The live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), is available to individuals between the ages of 2 through 49 years of age who have no underlying health conditions. Ask your healthcare provider for more information.

## Q: How serious is influenza?

**A:** Every year in the United States, an average of more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and about 36,000 people die from flu. Very young children (less than 2 years old) are hospitalized with the flu as much as older persons (65 years of age and older). Children 2 to 5 years of age are more likely to require care at a clinic or emergency department for their influenza illness than older children and adults.

## Q: What are the side effects from the vaccine?

**A:** Almost all people who get the influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. The most common side effects include soreness where the shot was given, a low-grade fever or mild body aches. If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot and usually last one to two days. Some people should not be given the influenza vaccine:

- Infants less than 6 months of age
- People with a severe allergy to eggs, egg products or any component of the vaccine
- Anyone with a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome
- Anyone sick with a fever should talk with the doctor or nurse about when to get the vaccine

## Q: Isn't the influenza vaccine just for older people?

**A:** No. Influenza vaccine is strongly recommended for any person older than 6 months who is at increased risk for complications from influenza. Anyone with a chronic medical condition such as asthma, heart

disease or diabetes should be vaccinated. People in close contact with persons at high risk, including care givers, should be vaccinated to decrease their risk for spreading influenza. Influenza vaccine also can be administered to any person aged older than 6 months to reduce the chance of becoming infected with influenza.

## Q: What is the difference between a cold and the flu?

**A:** The flu and the common cold are both respiratory illnesses but they are caused by different viruses. In general, the flu is worse than the common cold, and symptoms such as fever, body aches, extreme tiredness and dry cough are more common and intense. Colds are usually milder than the flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems such as pneumonia, bacterial infections or hospitalizations.

## Q: Why do I need to get vaccinated every year?

**A:** Flu viruses change from year to year. A vaccine made against flu viruses circulating last year may not protect against the newer viruses. That is why the influenza vaccine is updated to include current viruses every year. Another reason to get flu vaccine every year is that after you get vaccinated, your immunity to the disease declines over time and may be too low to provide protection after one year.

## Q: Is the flu really a big deal?

**A:** Yes. It is estimated that each year in the United States, there are more than 20,000 children less than 5 years old hospitalized due to flu. To protect their health, it is now recommended that all children from 6 months through 18 years of age should be vaccinated against the flu each year.

Adapted from *Protect Your Child Against Influenza: "The Flu."* Published by the American Lung Association 8/2006.

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Kids Get  
Flu, Too!

Protect Yours!

Vaccine Information from  
The Ohio Department of Health



# What every parent should know about INFLUENZA...

## WHAT is Influenza?

Influenza, also called “the flu,” is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Every year in the United States, on average 5 to 20 percent of the population gets the flu. Some people such as older people, **young children** and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu **vaccination** each year.

## HOW does it spread?

Influenza viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five days after becoming sick. Children spread more influenza viruses for even longer periods of time. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

Influenza season usually runs from November to April, but can begin as early as October and last as late as May. October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but you can still get vaccinated in December and later.



## WHO should get influenza vaccination?

In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended that everyone over 6 months old should get a influenza vaccine.

Persons at greatest risk for medical complications include:

- All children aged 6 months through 4 years (59 months)
- All persons 50 years old and older
- Children and adults who have chronic lung (including asthma), heart/circulatory (except isolated hypertension), kidney, liver, neurological, blood or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus)
- Persons who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or HIV)
- Women who are or will be pregnant during flu season
- Children and adolescents (aged 6 months–18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- American Indians/Alaska natives
- Persons who are morbidly obese (BMI≥40)
- Health care providers
- Household contacts and caregivers of children under 5 years old years and adults 50 years and older, with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children under 6 months of age
- Household contacts and caregivers of persons with medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe complication from the flu.

## Resources:

CDC: [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/other\\_flu.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/other_flu.htm)  
[http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5908a1.htm?s\\_cid=rr5908a1e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5908a1.htm?s_cid=rr5908a1e)

Ohio Department of Health:  
<http://www.odh.ohio.gov>

## WHY should children be vaccinated?

Children are at increased risk of needing influenza-related medical care. Influenza causes more hospitalizations among young children than any other vaccine-preventable disease. Additionally, influenza/pneumonia is the **sixth-leading cause of death among young children (1 to 4 years old)** in the United States. There is evidence showing that reducing influenza transmission among children has the potential to reduce influenza among their household contacts and within the community. Vaccinating healthy children aged 6 months through 18 years of age can decrease the risk of influenza infections among children of all ages, reducing their need for medical visits and missed time from school.

## WHAT can I do to protect my child against influenza?

- Tell your doctor you want your child vaccinated this fall
- Make an appointment to have your child vaccinated
- Keep the appointment and get your child vaccinated
- Encourage family members and friends to get vaccinated
- Get vaccinated yourself
- Practice good hygiene—wash your hands often and cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Stay home if your are sick

## Vaccine Information from:

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