



# Flu Facts

**Get Vaccinated. Stop the Flu. The Flu Ends with U.**

## **Flu Vaccine Recommendations**

Vantage Physicians, The Washington State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that everyone aged six months and older get an annual flu vaccination.

**Dr. Ritchie and Dr. Kershnik want everyone to get a flu shot this year. We have free flu shots available for our patients whose insurance does not cover the cost or who are too frail to visit the pharmacy. We also have flu shots available at no charge for our patients age 18 and under. Please call the office at 360-438-1161 to make an appointment or if you have a question regarding flu shots.**

## **Who should get flu vaccine?**

Everyone! Getting a flu vaccine every year is the best way to prevent flu. Every flu season is different it affects people differently. Even healthy kids and adults can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. Vantage Physicians, The Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that everyone aged six months and older get a flu vaccine as soon as it is available. Certain people are at greater risk and are encouraged to [get a flu vaccine](#), including:

- Older people.
- Young kids.
- Kids and adults of any age with certain chronic health conditions or special health care needs, such as chronic lung disease (such as asthma and COPD), diabetes (type 1 and 2), heart disease, neurologic conditions, and certain other long-term health conditions.
- Pregnant women.
- Household contacts and caregivers of people in any of the above groups.

- Household contacts and caregivers of babies under six months of age who are too young to get flu vaccine.
- Health care professionals.

## **Flu Basics**

### **What is seasonal flu (influenza)?**

Influenza (commonly called the flu) infects the nose, throat, windpipe, and lungs (respiratory tract). We call the flu that comes every year the "seasonal" or "yearly" flu. Flu seasons are unpredictable and can be severe. Flu causes thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations in our country each year.

### **When does flu occur?**

Flu occurs in the United States most often in the fall and winter and commonly peaks in February. Flu-like symptoms in summer months are usually due to other viruses.

### **What's the difference between influenza and the "flu?"**

Influenza is commonly called the "flu." However, not all things called the "flu" are caused by influenza, so how do you know? Influenza infects the nose, throat, windpipe, and lungs (respiratory tract), but not the intestines (gastrointestinal or GI tract). So flu is not the same as what many people call the "stomach flu." The best way to tell if you have influenza is for a health care provider to swab your throat and have a lab confirm the diagnosis.

### **What does flu cause?**

The flu causes mild to severe illness and can lead to serious illness and death. Some people, such as older people, young kids, and people with certain health conditions (like asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious flu complications.

### **What are the symptoms of flu?**

People with flu often have high fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, fatigue (tiredness), headache, and sometimes nasal congestion. If you or someone you know has these symptoms and they are severe, contact your doctor as soon as possible.

### **Does past infection with flu make a person immune?**

No. Because viruses that cause flu change frequently, people who have had the flu or a flu shot in previous years may become infected with a new strain.

### **How does flu spread?**

The flu spreads easily from person-to-person by coughing and sneezing. Influenza viruses change each year and this is why it's called "seasonal" or "yearly" flu. A new batch of vaccine is made each year based on these viruses. [Get vaccinated](#) every year for the best protection against influenza.

### **Can flu vaccine give you the flu?**

No. Flu vaccine cannot give you the flu. Some people incorrectly believe that they can get flu from the vaccine. This is not true. The flu shot only contains proteins from the influenza virus, so the virus cannot reproduce itself and cause illness. While the nasal spray vaccine contains live influenza virus, the virus has been weakened in the lab, so it cannot grow in the lungs and cannot cause the flu. Some people report not feeling “well” after their shot, this is their body building up immunities. A well-balanced diet with plenty of sleep and water will help with this.

### **About Flu Vaccine**

#### **Will the 2010-2011 flu vaccine protect against H1N1?**

Yes. There will only be one flu vaccine this year. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine protects against three different flu strains including H1N1 that caused so much illness last season.

#### **If I got vaccinated against H1N1 last year do I still need a flu shot this year?**

Yes, even people that got vaccinated with H1N1 last season need to be vaccinated with the 2010-2011 flu vaccine since it protects against other influenza strains in addition to H1N1.

#### **Does vaccine protect throughout the flu season?**

Yes, getting vaccinated now will protect you throughout the flu season. Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself, your family, and your community from the flu.

#### **How do I find a flu vaccine?**

1. Vantage Physicians is giving shots to children ages 6 months to 18 years, adults who are uninsured and frail patients who are not able to get out to the local pharmacy shot clinics.
2. Local pharmacy shot clinics.
3. Check the American Lung Association's [Flu Shot Locator](#).
4. Contact your [local health department](#).
5. Call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

#### **How many types of flu vaccine are there?**

You can choose from two types of flu vaccine. If you're not sure which is best for you or your family, ask your doctor. With either vaccine, kids under age nine may need two doses in the same flu season if they have not had flu vaccine before or if they have not had two flu shots in one season.

## **Flu shot (for anyone aged six months and older)**

The flu shot, or Trivalent Inactivated Vaccine (TIV), contains inactivated (killed) viruses and may cause some soreness where the shot is given. The flu shot can be given to anyone age six months and older.

## **Nasal spray (for healthy kids, teens, and non-pregnant adults aged 2 to 49 years)**

The nasal spray flu vaccine, or Live, Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV), contains live, weakened flu viruses. The spray can cause mild congestion and runny nose. Some may get a low-grade fever or feel achy for one to two days while their immune system responds to the vaccine. It can be given to healthy kids over age 2 and non-pregnant teens and adults under 49 years. Check with your health care provider or local pharmacy about how to get the nasal spray (commonly called FluMist).

Find information on flu vaccine, TIV, and LAIV on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website](#).

## **How effective is the flu vaccine?**

The effectiveness of flu vaccines can vary and depends in part on the match between the strains in the vaccine and the flu viruses that are circulating in the community as well as the age and health of the person being vaccinated. The flu vaccine is used to prevent illness, not to treat it. It takes about two weeks for your body to build immunity for protection against the flu.

## **Vaccine Safety**

### **Is the flu vaccine safe?**

Yes. Flu vaccines have a very good and long safety record. Over the last 50 years, flu vaccines have been shown to be safe. The vaccine is made and rigorously tested in the same way each year, no matter what strains are included.

Like any medication, vaccines may have side effects. Every year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works closely with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), health care providers, state and local health departments, and other partners to ensure the highest safety standards for flu vaccines. The CDC also works closely with the FDA to monitor unexpected health problems following vaccination.

Visit these links for more information about vaccine safety:

- [Vaccine safety information](#) (Flu.gov)
- [Vaccine questions and answers](#) (Food and Drug Administration)

### **Are there side effects to the flu vaccine?**

People who get the flu vaccine will be screened to make sure they do not have a medical condition, such as an allergy to eggs that would make it unsafe for them to be vaccinated. A fact sheet will be provided about the vaccine's benefits and risks, signs of side effects to look for after vaccination and how to report side effects (also called adverse events).

Side effects from the flu vaccine are mild, localized reactions. The most common side effects are:

- Soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot was given; fainting (mainly adolescents); headache; muscle aches; fever; and nausea. If these problems do occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last one to two days.
- Life-threatening allergic reactions are rare. If they do occur, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot was given.

### **What can I do if I have a side effect from a vaccine?**

If you think you or your child may have a side effect from a vaccine, be sure to discuss this with your doctor and ask your doctor to file a report with the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS).

### **Good Health Habits**

#### **Protect yourself and others--use good health habits**

Take these simple precautions to help prevent the spread of flu and other lung and breathing (respiratory) diseases:

- Get a flu vaccine every year.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your upper sleeve, not your bare hand.
- Use a tissue to wipe your nose, and then throw the tissue away.
- **Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.** If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gel or disposable wipes.
- Stay home and away from others while you or your family members are sick.
- Wear a mask to cover your face in a medical office, if asked.

### **Antibiotics**

- **Important information about antibiotics**

Antibiotics don't work against viruses such as colds or influenza. If you take antibiotics for a viral illness, you could develop resistant germs or "superbugs." Then, when you really need the antibiotic for a serious bacterial infection, it may not work. [Find more information on the Department of Health antibiotics page.](#)

### **Related Links**

- [Seasonal Influenza \(Flu\)](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- [Flu.gov](#) (United States Health & Human Services)