

## The Who, Why, and Where of Getting the Flu Vaccine This Season

### Who Needs to Be Protected Against the Flu

Influenza -- “the flu” -- is a contagious respiratory illness. It’s caused by several different flu viruses that exist year-round, but are most common in the fall and winter in the US. Flu season is usually October through March, but some years it can last into the summer.

Anyone from babies to the elderly can get the flu. For some people it’s mild, but for others it can be severe and can even cause death. Serious problems from the flu can happen to anyone, but people at a higher risk include those 65 years of age or older or younger than 5, pregnant women, and people with conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease.



Almost everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every year. Talk to your doctor about if there’s a reason you shouldn’t get it, or if you think you shouldn’t get it.

### Why Getting the Flu Vaccine Is Important, Especially This Season

The best way to keep from getting the flu is to get an influenza vaccine -- usually by getting a flu shot -- every year. This also lowers your chances of serious problems from the flu and of spreading it to others. The flu vaccine stimulates your immune system -- your body’s defense system -- to produce special substances and cells that can fight the flu virus. The flu vaccine may not keep you from getting the flu, but if you get it, you won’t get as sick and you’ll have fewer complications than you would if you didn’t get the vaccine.

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The flu vaccine doesn't increase your risk of getting the flu or other illnesses. But there are other viruses during flu season that can make you sick, such as those that cause the common cold and the coronavirus that causes coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19. Getting the flu can make it easier for you to get other viruses and illnesses. Getting the flu vaccine can help keep you and your lungs healthy. This can be especially important if you're exposed to COVID-19. The flu vaccine can also help keep you from getting sick enough to go to the hospital. This can be especially important this flu season when trying to avoid crowded places and situations where COVID-19 may be increased.

## Where and When to Get the Flu Vaccine

The best time to get the flu vaccine is before flu season starts. But you can get it any time and vaccination continues throughout the season. Talk to your doctor about the right time to get vaccinated.

Getting the flu vaccine this season may be different than it was in past flu seasons. Places that usually give the vaccine -- like your doctor's office, clinic, or pharmacy -- may be seeing patients in a different way or have specific hours or rules for giving the vaccine so they can control the number of patients and ensure social distancing. Getting the flu vaccine is important so be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist where and when you and your family should get yours.



### Other questions you can ask your doctor include:

Why is it especially important to get the flu shot this year?

What type of flu vaccine is best for me and my family?

What else can I do to protect myself and my family from the flu and other illnesses?