



2023-24 Influenza Vaccine Fact Sheet

The best way to protect yourself and your family, and to prevent severe illness from the flu virus, is to get the flu vaccine this fall! Getting immunized can avoid unnecessary health care visits or isolating due to symptoms. Get vaccinated by contacting your local pharmacist or health care provider.

Influenza Illness

Influenza is an acute respiratory infection (ARI). Symptoms can include new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, fever, sore throat, headache, myalgia, and lethargy. Diarrhea, nausea and vomiting may occur- especially in children. Elderly adults may not develop a fever response. In most people, illness resolves within five to seven days, however the very young and old could develop complications such as pneumonia or middle ear infections.

The Influenza virus is very contagious. One may become infectious during the 24 hours prior to onset of symptoms; viral shedding in nasal secretions usually peaks during the first 3 days of illness and ceases within 7 days but can be prolonged in young children and the immunocompromised. Many individuals infected with the influenza virus are asymptomatic. On very rare occasions, the influenza virus can lead to Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a neurological disorder.

Vaccine Benefits

People who are at higher risk of complications from the flu include infants and young children, adults aged 65 and older, Indigenous individuals, as well as those with chronic medical conditions or who are taking medications that impact their immune system. The annual flu shot strengthens the body's response against the flu by stimulating the immune system to build antibodies against the virus, making the body stronger and ready to fight off the virus. Getting the flu vaccine decreases your chances of getting the flu and also protects those around you, especially those at higher risk from being exposed to the virus. The flu vaccine cannot cause influenza because it does not contain any live virus. It takes two weeks for your body to develop an immune response from the vaccine.

Vaccines for Adults 65+

Influenza can make older adults very sick. Two vaccines are approved just for seniors to give better protection against the flu. Both vaccines provide additional protection to seniors against the flu. Both of these vaccines may cause more soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given, lasting a few days longer than the standard vaccine.



Who Should NOT get the Influenza Vaccine?

Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose of influenza vaccine, to any ingredient in the vaccine, or severe allergy to egg or egg product should **NOT** be vaccinated. If you have a severe egg allergy-talk to your health care provider about your options. This vaccine is not for people who have had Guillain-Barre Syndrome within 6 weeks after previous flu vaccination. **HOWEVER**, this should be weighed against the risks of not being protected against influenza with the individual's health care practitioner. People with a history of Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome can get the vaccine but should speak with their doctor first.

Influenza Vaccines

The publicly-funded vaccines this year are FluLaval Tetra, Fluzone® QIV, Fluzone® QIV-HD, or Fluvad® TIV-adj.

Side Effects and Risks

It is much safer to get the flu vaccine than to get the flu. Flu vaccines are safe and well tolerated. Side effects are usually mild and last a few days. Common side effects include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, headache, fever, muscle aches, joint pain or feeling tired. Side effects in children include irritability, drowsiness, or loss of appetite. In rare cases, serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) can occur. Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, rash or swelling of the face and throat. Allergic reactions can be treated and are usually temporary. The risk of Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome or Guillain-Barre Syndrome after flu vaccination is very low, about one case in a million flu shots.

Getting your COVID-19 Vaccine at the same time as your Influenza Vaccine

Anyone over the age of 6 months can receive both the influenza vaccine and many other vaccines, such as the COVID vaccine, at the same time. During the 2023/24 flu and COVID season, you are encouraged to receive both your COVID booster and the flu shot at the same time for convenience and to ensure you are protected against both diseases as soon as possible.

How to Avoid Getting and Spreading the Flu

Get the flu shot!

To reduce the chances of catching and spreading the flu:

- Wash your hands often
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Don't touch your face
- Stay at home when you are sick; and
- Clean (and disinfect) surfaces and shared items.