

Facts about the flu (influenza) and the flu vaccine

The flu (influenza) is a contagious infection caused by viruses. The flu can cause mild to severe illness.

The flu vaccine helps protect against the flu viruses that may be the most common each year.

The flu can be dangerous

- Anyone can get the flu. It is most dangerous for young children, people over age 65, and people with a medical condition like heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes.
- The flu is easy to catch. It is usually spread by coughing or sneezing.
- The flu and complications from the flu can sometimes cause people to be hospitalized, or even lead to death.

How can you help prevent the flu?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against the flu each year for everyone 6 months and older.

- You can get vaccinated against the flu as soon as the vaccine is available each year. The flu season can last from October to May, and usually peaks in February.

- There are two types of flu vaccines:
 - The flu shot contains killed viruses. You cannot get the flu from the flu shot.
 - A nasal spray vaccine is also available. Only certain people can get the nasal spray.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about which type of vaccination is best for you

If you get the flu:

- Ask your provider about medicines that may help you get better faster.
- Follow your provider's instructions about rest, diet, and medicines.
- Avoid spreading the flu to others:
 - Stay away from others as much as possible
 - Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
 - Wash your hands often
 - Tell others to wash their hands after being near you

Flu vaccination may not keep every person from getting the flu.

**Help protect yourself from the flu.
Ask your healthcare provider about your yearly flu vaccine.**