

# 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.**