

Seasonal Influenza Public Information Sheet

What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a respiratory illness caused by flu viruses that can spread easily from person to person. Influenza can cause mild to severe illness. Symptoms usually are fever and cough and/or sore throat. Symptoms may also include headache, extreme tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, or muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea can also occur, especially in children.

What should I do to prevent the flu?

Get vaccinated! Everybody age 6 months and older should get influenza vaccine every year.

What should I know about the flu vaccine this year?

There are three different flu vaccines available:

- a regular flu shot approved for people ages 6 months and older and an intradermal flu shot approved for those 18-64 years of age
- a high-dose flu shot approved for people 65 and older, and
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine — a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that is given as a nasal spray (sometimes called LAIV for “Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine”). The viruses in the nasal spray vaccine do not cause the flu. LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 2 through 49 years of age who are not pregnant

All types of influenza vaccine protect against 3 strains of flu:

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-like virus;
- A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)-like virus; and
- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

These are the same viruses that were selected for the Northern Hemisphere for the 2010-2011 influenza vaccine

Most people need only one dose for protection. Children aged 6 months through 8 years require 2 doses of influenza vaccine (administered a minimum of 4 weeks apart) during their **first** season of vaccination to optimize immune response. In a study of children aged 5 through 8 years who received trivalent inactivated vaccine (TIV) for the first time, the proportion of children with protective antibody responses was significantly higher after 2 doses than after 1 dose. Talk to your child’s healthcare provider.

Some people should NOT get the live attenuated vaccine (‘nasal spray’)

LAIV is not recommended for everyone. The following people should get the inactivated vaccine (flu shot) instead:

- Adults 50 years of age and older or children from 6 through 23 months of age. (Children younger than 6 months should not get either influenza vaccine.)
- Children younger than 5 years with asthma or one or more episodes of wheezing within the past year.
- Pregnant women.
- People who have long-term health problems with: -heart disease -kidney or liver disease -lung disease -metabolic disease, such as diabetes -asthma -anemia, and other blood disorders

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- Anyone with certain muscle or nerve disorders (such as seizure disorders or cerebral palsy) that can lead to breathing or swallowing problems.
- Anyone with a weakened immune system.
- Anyone in close contact with someone whose immune system is so weak they require care in a protected environment (such as a bone marrow transplant unit). Close contacts of other people with a weakened immune system (such as those with HIV) may receive LAIV. Healthcare personnel in neonatal intensive care units or oncology clinics may receive LAIV.
- Children or adolescents on long-term aspirin treatment.

Tell your doctor if you have any severe (life-threatening) allergies, including a severe allergy to eggs. If you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness, also called GBS). Your doctor will help you decide whether the vaccine is recommended for you.

Is there anyone who should NOT get inactivated vaccine ('flu shot')?

- Tell your doctor if you have any severe (life-threatening) allergies, including a severe allergy to eggs. A severe allergy to any vaccine component may be a reason not to get the vaccine. Allergic reactions to influenza vaccine are rare.
- Tell your doctor if you ever had a severe reaction after a dose of influenza vaccine.
- Tell your doctor if you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness, also called GBS). Your doctor will help you decide whether the vaccine is recommended for you.
- People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting flu vaccine. If you are ill, talk to your doctor about whether to reschedule the vaccination

Does everyone who is sick with the flu need to see a health care provider?

Most children and adults who are sick with the flu and are generally in good health will recover without needing to visit a health care provider. Some people may want to call their health care provider for advice about how to care for the flu at home. You can also get home care information from <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/parents>

Who should call or visit a health care provider if they get flu symptoms?

- Children and adults who are at higher risk for severe illness or complications (see list below)
- Children and adults with more severe flu symptoms should contact a health care provider.

Whenever possible, **call** your health care provider to get advice before making an appointment or visiting. Please do not go to an emergency department unless you have severe symptoms or you are at increased risk of complications and cannot access a doctor's office or clinic.

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I think I have the flu. What should I do?

- If you are sick with the flu, you may be ill for a few days to a week. Please stay home so you can get better and prevent others from getting ill. Drink plenty of fluids and rest as much as possible. Avoid travel. Do not go to work, school or other public places until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (without use of fever-reducing medications).
- Only go out if you need medical care or other important supplies. If you leave the house to seek medical care, please wear a facemask when you get to the healthcare facility.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap or use hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve and wash your hands after coughs and sneezes.
- In general, avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially those with one of the high-risk chronic conditions listed on the next page.

I think I have the flu. Should I get tested and treated for flu?

Testing and treatment is not needed or recommended for most children and adults who get influenza. Antiviral treatment (a prescription medicine) is recommended primarily for people with the flu who have severe illness or who are at higher risk for complications.

Who is at increased risk for more severe illness or complications from flu?

- Children younger than 5 years old – particularly children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women and women up to 2 weeks post partum
- People with the following medical conditions:
 - Chronic diseases of the lungs, heart, kidney, liver, blood, brain or nervous system, muscles (particularly those that cause difficulty with swallowing). Diabetes is also a risk factor;
 - A weakened immune system, including caused by medications or by HIV; or
 - People 18 years old or younger who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

When should I see a medical provider right away?

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, go to an emergency room or urgent care center.

Emergency warning signs among **children** include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color (call 911 immediately)
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

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When should I see a medical provider right away? (cont.)

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, go to an emergency room or urgent care center.

Emergency warning signs among **adults** include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

For more information:

- State of West Virginia influenza website at <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/flu/Pages/default.aspx>
- State of West Virginia Flu Resource Center website at <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/immunization/Pages/flu.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) influenza information: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>