

# Influenza Vaccine

## What You Need to Know 2007-08

Information Provided by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Southeastern District Health Department

---

### **Why get vaccinated?**

- Influenza (“flu”) is a contagious disease. It is caused by the influenza virus, which spreads from infected persons to the nose or throat of others. Other illnesses can have the same symptoms and are often mistaken for influenza. Anyone can get influenza, but rates of infection are highest among children. For most people, it lasts only a few days. It can cause: fever · sore throat · chills · fatigue · cough · headache · muscle aches
- Some people get much sicker. Influenza can lead to pneumonia and can be dangerous for people with heart or breathing conditions. It can cause high fever and seizures in children.

### **There are two types of influenza vaccine**

- Inactivated (killed) vaccine, or the “flu shot” is given by injection into the muscle.
- Live, attenuated (weakened) influenza vaccine, called LAIV, is sprayed into the nostrils.
  - For most people influenza vaccine prevents serious influenza-related illness. But it will not prevent “influenza-like” illnesses caused by other viruses.
  - Influenza viruses are always changing. Because of this, influenza vaccines are updated every year, and an annual vaccination is recommended. Protection lasts up to a year.
  - It takes up to 2 weeks for protection to develop after the vaccination.

### **Who is annual vaccination against influenza recommended for?**

- All persons, including school-aged children, who want to reduce their risk of becoming ill with influenza or of spreading it to others
- All children ages 6–59 months
- All persons age 50 years or older
- All children and teenagers receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
- Adults and children with any of the following conditions:
  - a chronic disorder of the pulmonary or cardiovascular system
  - a chronic disease of the blood, liver, or kidneys, immunosuppression (e.g., caused by medications, HIV), or diabetes
  - compromised ability to handle respiratory secretions or an
  - increased risk for aspiration (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, or other neuromuscular disorder)
- All residents of nursing homes or other chronic-care facilities
- All healthcare personnel
- All household contacts (including children) and caregivers of children ages 0–59 months (especially younger than 6 months), adults 50 years and older, and persons having high-risk medical conditions

- Persons planning to travel to an area of the world with influenza activity (e.g., to the tropics at any time of the year)

#### **Who can get LAIV?**

- LAIV is approved for **healthy people from 5 through 49 years of age**, who are not pregnant.

#### **When should I get influenza vaccine?**

Plan to get influenza vaccine in October or November if you can. **But getting vaccinated in December, or even later, will still be beneficial in most years.**

Children younger than 9 years of age getting influenza vaccine for the first time should get 2 doses. For inactivated vaccine, these doses should be given at least 4 weeks apart. For the live, intranasal vaccine they should be separated by 6 weeks.

#### **Some people should talk with a doctor before getting influenza vaccine.**

Some people should not get inactivated influenza vaccine or should wait before getting it.

- Tell your doctor if you have any severe (life-threatening) allergies. Allergic reactions to influenza vaccine are rare. (Influenza vaccine virus is grown in eggs. People with a severe egg allergy should not get the vaccine.)
- Tell your doctor if you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness, also called GBS). You may be able to get the vaccine, but your doctor should help you make the decision.
- 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 or nurse about whether to reschedule the vaccination.

#### **What are the possible side effects?**

- The most common side effects from TIV are soreness and redness at the injection site, lasting 1–2 days.
- The most common side effects from LAIV are runny nose and nasal congestion.

#### **What if there is a severe reaction?**

A severe reaction can be any unusual condition, such as a high fever or behavior changes. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

Call a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.

- Tell your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.

#### **How can I learn more?**

- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
- Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)
- Visit CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)