

# Influenza Vaccine

## Inactivated

### What You Need to Know

2012 - 2013

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages.  
See [www.immunize.org/vis](http://www.immunize.org/vis).

Hojas de Información Sobre Vacunas están disponibles en Español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite <http://www.immunize.org/vis>

#### 1 Why get vaccinated?

**Influenza (“flu”) is a contagious disease.**

It is caused by the influenza virus, which can be spread by coughing, sneezing, or nasal secretions.

Anyone can get influenza, but rates of infection are highest among children. For most people, symptoms last only a few days. They include:

- fever/chills
- sore throat
- muscle aches
- fatigue
- cough
- headache
- runny or stuffy nose

Other illnesses can have the same symptoms and are often mistaken for influenza.

Young children, people 65 and older, pregnant women, and people with certain health conditions – such as heart, lung or kidney disease, or a weakened immune system – can get much sicker. Flu can cause high fever and pneumonia, and make existing medical conditions worse. It can cause diarrhea and seizures in children. Each year thousands of people die from influenza and even more require hospitalization.

By getting flu vaccine you can protect yourself from influenza and may also avoid spreading influenza to others.

#### 2 Inactivated influenza vaccine

There are two types of influenza vaccine:

1. **Inactivated** (killed) vaccine, the “flu shot,” is given by injection with a needle.

2. **Live, attenuated** (weakened) influenza vaccine is sprayed into the nostrils. *This vaccine is described in a separate Vaccine Information Statement.*

A “high-dose” inactivated influenza vaccine is available for people 65 years of age and older. Ask your doctor for more information.

Influenza viruses are always changing, so annual vaccination is recommended. Each year scientists try to match the viruses in the vaccine to those most likely to cause flu that year. Flu vaccine will not prevent disease from other viruses, including flu viruses not contained in the vaccine.

It takes up to 2 weeks for protection to develop after the shot. Protection lasts about a year.

Some inactivated influenza vaccine contains a preservative called thimerosal. Thimerosal-free influenza vaccine is available. Ask your doctor for more information.

#### 3 Who should get inactivated influenza vaccine and when?

##### WHO

All people **6 months of age and older** should get flu vaccine.

Vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of severe influenza and their close contacts, including healthcare personnel and close contacts of children younger than 6 months.

##### WHEN

Get the vaccine as soon as it is available. This should provide protection if the flu season comes early. You can get the vaccine as long as illness is occurring in your community.

Influenza can occur at any time, but most influenza occurs from October through May. In recent seasons, most infections have occurred in January and February. Getting vaccinated in December, or even later, will still be beneficial in most years.

Adults and older children need one dose of influenza vaccine each year. But some children younger than 9 years of age need two doses to be protected. Ask your doctor.

Influenza vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines, including pneumococcal vaccine.

#### 4 Some people should not get inactivated influenza vaccine or should wait.

- 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.



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