

Do I Really Need a Flu Shot?



Getting a flu shot can benefit you and your family and can also benefit those around you. Each year, 5-20% of the U.S. population gets the flu and as many as 36,000 people die from it. The best way to treat the flu is to prevent it. Immunization protects yourself and others from getting the illness.

Who Should Get the Flu Shot?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that children ages 6 months to 18 years get the flu shot. Previously, the CDC had recommended immunization for children 5 and under. The revised recommendation comes after studies showed that populations with a large number of school-aged children had 4 times the occurrences of flu than occurred among mostly adult populations. The study showed that schools and daycares act as incubators for the flu because kids are less likely to cover their coughs and sneezes or wash their hands.

The CDC recommends flu shots for the following people:

- All children age 6 months to 18 years old.
- All people aged 50 years and older.
- Children and adolescents (ages 6 months to 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season (but NOT if they are already in their first three months of pregnancy).
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, renal, hepatic, hematological or metabolic disorders. This list includes asthmatics and diabetics, but does not include people who only have hypertension (high blood pressure).
- Adults and children who have weakened immune systems.
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities.
- Health care personnel.
- Caregivers of children less than 5 years old and adults 50 and older.

Who Should NOT Get Vaccinated?

- People who have had a severe reaction to chickens or egg protein.
- People who have a fever or illness that is more than "just a cold."
- People who have had a moderate to severe reaction after a previous flu vaccine.
- A woman who is or may be in the first 3 months of pregnancy.
- People who have experienced Guillain-Barre Syndrome.



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Other Prevention Tips

In addition to getting the influenza vaccination, there are additional measures to help prevent the flu.

- Wash your hands frequently with warm soapy water. If you can't wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer for a quick clean-up.
- Clean surfaces with a disinfectant.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Cover your nose and mouth while coughing and sneezing, using the crook of your elbow or a facial tissue to help cover these areas, rather than your hands.
- If you do become sick, stay home. This helps prevent the infection from spreading to other people.

It is important to visit with your physician to see if a flu shot is right for you.

For more information please see the following websites:

www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm

www.mayoclinic.com/health/flu-shots/ID00017