

# Benefits of Getting a Flu Shot

## An Ounce of Prevention ...

Getting a flu shot can benefit you and your family – but it can also benefit those around you. Shopping malls, schools, grocery stores and churches are places where crowds gather, and the flu can thrive among them. Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting the flu. October is the beginning of cold and flu season – and the best way to treat the flu is to prevent it.

Each year 5 – 20% of the US population get the flu and as many as 36,000 die from it.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is recommending that children from 6 months to 18 years get the flu shot. Previously the CDC had recommended the shot for children 5 and under. The recommendation comes after studies showed that in populations with a large number of school-aged children; had 4 times the occurrence of flu than adults. The study showed that schools and daycares act as incubators for the flu because kids are less likely to cover their coughs and sneezes and wash their hands less than the adult population.

## Who should get the flu shot?

Besides the above-mentioned addition of school-aged children, the CDC recommends flu shots if you meet one or more of the following criteria.

- Anyone who would like to reduce the risk of becoming ill or transmitting influenza to others.
- All children age 6 months to 18 years old
- All people aged 50 years and older
- Children and adolescents (6 mon. – 18 years) receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological or metabolic disorders (including Diabetes)
- Adults and children who have weakened immune systems
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities
- Health care personnel
- Healthy household contacts (including children) and caregivers of children less than 5 years old and adults 50 and older.

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## 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.

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

## 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 sick.
- 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.

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### For more information please see the following websites:

[Http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm)

[Http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/flu-shots/ID00017](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/flu-shots/ID00017)