



Is a Flu Shot for You?

Usually referred to as the flu, influenza is a highly infectious respiratory illness. Each year, at least 35 million Americans suffer from the aches and pains of the flu, which typically knocks them off their feet for at least a few days. Influenza can lead to pneumonia and even death in people who are at risk.

Who should get a flu shot?

People of any age can acquire the flu. Anyone who wants to forego the discomfort and inconvenience of an influenza attack may receive the vaccine. Flu shots are especially recommended for the elderly, as well as children and adults with chronic diseases. The Centers for Disease Control identifies the following categories of those at highest risk:

- Anyone greater than 50 years of age
- Those at any age with a chronic medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes
- Healthcare workers, or anyone who works with people at high risk
- All children 6 to 23 months of age, especially those with a medical condition

When to get vaccinated

Federal health officials say the ideal time to get vaccinated against the flu is between September and December. “Flu season” in the United States usually runs from November to March or April.

Because the viruses that cause the flu change often, the flu vaccine is updated each year by replacing at least one of the vaccine viruses with a newer one. Protection develops about two weeks after the shot and may last up to a year. A new shot is needed every year.

No flu from shot

The injected vaccine is a “killed vaccine” and does not cause the flu. People should remember that although the flu vaccine is highly effective, no vaccine is 100 percent effective. The flu shot protects only against the flu, and not against other causes of fever and colds.

Consult with your doctor before getting a flu shot, particularly if you:

- Ever had a serious allergic reaction to eggs or a previous dose of flu vaccine, or
- Have a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS), a severe paralytic illness

If you are moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled, wait until you recover before getting the flu vaccine.

Source: UnitedHealthcare

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