

Tips for the 2011-12 Influenza Season



1. What is the best way to prevent the flu?

The best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each year.

2. What types of vaccines are available?

There are two types of vaccines.

The "flu shot"— an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) is given with a needle, usually in the arm. This vaccine is approved for use with people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

The nasal-spray flu vaccine — is a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu. This vaccine is approved for use with healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

3. If the influenza vaccine composition is the same for the upcoming season as it was last season, do I need to get vaccinated again?

Yes. People should get vaccinated every year because even if the viruses in the vaccine are the same as the year before, immunity to influenza viruses declines over time and may be too low to provide protection after a year.

4. After getting the flu vaccine when will I be protected?

About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against influenza virus infection develop in the body.

5. When should I get the flu vaccine?

Yearly flu vaccination should begin in September or as soon as vaccine is available and continue throughout the influenza season, into December, January, and beyond. This is because the timing and duration of influenza seasons vary. While influenza outbreaks can happen as early as October, most of the time influenza activity peaks in January or later.

6. What are some other measures you can take to prevent getting the flu?

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick keep your distance from others.
- Clean your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.