



Frequently asked questions About the flu

Q: Will I get the flu from the flu shot?

A: No. The flu vaccine is created from dead or inactive viruses that are noninfectious.

Q: Do I need a flu shot every year?

A: Yes. Influenza viruses change every year. A new vaccine is used annually to fight the most current influenza virus. In addition, the antibody a person develops from the vaccine declines over time.

Q: When should I get a flu shot?

A: Yearly flu vaccinations typically begin in September, or as soon as the vaccine is available, and continue throughout the flu season, which can last as late as May.

Q: Why should I get a flu shot?

A: Influenza usually leaves its victims unable to function for several days and is responsible for more than 200,000 hospitalizations each year. Getting an annual flu shot is your best protection.

Q: Who should get a flu shot?

A: Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu shot each year, particularly those at higher risk for complications and those who care for individuals considered high risk (see high-risk classification).

Q: Can I still get the flu after I get the flu shot?

A: Yes. Like other vaccines, the flu vaccine is not 100% effective and does not take effect until about two weeks after it is received. During this time, you will be just as susceptible to contract the flu as individuals who have not received the vaccination. Still, the best option to prevent the flu is to get an annual flu shot.

Q: Will I need a separate shot for the H1N1 virus?

A: No. The vaccine for H1N1 is now included in the standard flu shot.

Q: What are the side effects of getting a flu shot?

A: The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Almost all people who receive the influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. The most common side effects are soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given, a low-grade fever and aches. These potential side effects begin soon after the shot is administered and usually last one to two days. Rare side effects include severe allergic reactions. Anyone who is allergic to chicken eggs should avoid being vaccinated, since the virus used is grown in these eggs.

Q: Am I classified as high risk?

A: There may be times when the flu vaccine is only available to certain groups of people, including individuals at higher risk for complications and their caregivers. These include:

- + Children younger than 5 years of age, but especially children younger than 2 years of age
- + Adults 65 years of age and older
- + Pregnant women
- + People who have medical conditions including:
 - Asthma (even if it's controlled or mild)
 - Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions, including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability (mental retardation), moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury
 - Chronic lung disease, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and cystic fibrosis
 - Heart disease, such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease
 - Blood disorders, such as sickle cell disease
 - Endocrine disorders, such as diabetes mellitus
 - Kidney disorders
 - Liver disorders
 - Metabolic disorders, such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders
 - Weakened immune system due to disease or medication, such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids
 - People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- + People who are morbidly obese with a body mass index of 30 or greater
- + People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- + People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Health care workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 5 years of age with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children younger than 6 months of age (children younger than 6 months are at highest risk of flu-related complications but are too young to get vaccinated)

Visit bcbsnc.com/flu for more answers to your flu-related questions.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm. (Accessed May 2010)

In most cases, members with preventive care benefits will not be charged for receiving a flu shot at an in-network provider. Members with certain plans may not have preventive care benefits or may be responsible for a percentage of the cost of these benefits. Members should refer to their benefit booklet for more information about their preventive care benefits. Some members may be charged an office visit copayment when they visit their physician, depending on their specific benefits and the type of service performed. Nonmembers may receive a flu shot for \$30 (cash or check only). Members in self-funded plans should check with their plan administrator to determine if the influenza vaccine and FluMist®1 are covered benefits and, if covered, where they can receive the benefit at the lowest cost. Each clinic has been allocated a supply of vaccine. Shots will

be given on a first-come, first-served basis until the supply is depleted. A parent or legal guardian must accompany children ages 4-17 and provide written authorization (children under 4 should see their physician). These flu shots will be administered by representatives of Maxim Health Systems, a division of Maxim Healthcare Services. In the event that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend that flu shots go to "priority groups" before the general public, Maxim Health Systems will give priority to those who fit the CDC's high-risk criteria.

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