

# INACTIVATED INFLUENZA VACCINE

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1 Why get vaccinated?

**Influenza (“flu”) is a very contagious disease.**

It is caused by the influenza virus, which spreads from infected persons to the nose or throat of others.

Other illnesses can have the same symptoms and are often mistaken for influenza. But only an illness caused by the influenza virus is really influenza.

Anyone can get influenza. For most people, it lasts only a few days. It can cause:

- fever
- sore throat
- chills
- fatigue
- cough
- headache
- muscle aches

Some people get much sicker. Influenza can lead to pneumonia and can be dangerous for people with heart or breathing conditions. It can cause high fever and seizures in children. Influenza kills about 36,000 people each year in the United States, mostly among the elderly.

**Influenza vaccine can prevent influenza.**

### 2 Inactivated Influenza vaccine

There are two types of influenza vaccine:

An **inactivated** (killed) vaccine, given as a shot, has been used in the United States for many years.

A **live**, weakened vaccine was licensed in 2003. It is sprayed into the nostrils. *This vaccine is described in a separate Vaccine Information Statement.*

Influenza viruses are constantly changing. Therefore, influenza vaccines are updated every year, and an annual vaccination is recommended.

For most people influenza vaccine prevents serious illness

### 3 Who should get inactivated influenza vaccine?

If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1-2 days.

**Severe problems:**

- Life-threatening allergic reactions from vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it is within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot.
- In 1976, a certain type of influenza (swine flu) vaccine was associated with Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS). Since then, flu vaccines have not been clearly linked to GBS. However, if there is a risk of GBS from current flu vaccines, it would be no more than 1 or 2 cases per million people vaccinated. This is much lower than the risk of severe influenza, which can be prevented by vaccination.

The best time to get influenza vaccine is in **October** or **November**.

Influenza season usually peaks in February, but it can peak any time from November through May. So getting the vaccine in December, or even later, can be beneficial in most years.

Some people should get their flu shot in **October** or earlier:

- people **50 years of age and older**,
- younger people at **high risk** from influenza and its complications (including **children 6 through 23 months of age**),
- **household contacts** of people at high risk,
- **healthcare workers**, and
- **children younger than 9 years of age** getting influenza vaccine for the first time.

Most people need one flu shot each year. **Children younger than 9 years of age getting influenza vaccine for the first time** should get 2 doses, given at least one month apart.

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**Some people should talk with a doctor before getting influenza vaccine**

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**What are the risks from inactivated influenza vaccine?**

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of a vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

Serious problems from influenza vaccine are very rare. The viruses in inactivated influenza vaccine have been killed, so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

**Mild problems:**

- soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- fever
- aches

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**How can I learn more?**

- Ask your immunization provider. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
  - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)**
  - Visit CDC's website at **www.cdc.gov/flu**



**department of health and human services**  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Immunization Program