

Protect Yourself from the Flu



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Avoid Getting and Spreading the Flu

We want to keep you and your loved ones healthy and safe from the flu this season. The flu can cause you to have the chills, body aches, a fever, severe coughing and sneezing, and more symptoms that can have major health implications. However, the flu is preventable with a flu vaccine!

Typically, the flu can cause moderate to severe illnesses for healthy children and adults who aren't vaccinated. Some people may be at a higher risk for serious complications from the flu, such as people who are 65 years and older, adults or children with chronic heart or lung conditions, or pregnant women. In these cases, the flu can even be fatal.

Flu Vaccine FAQ

Q: Why should I get a flu vaccine?

A: The best way to prevent getting and spreading the flu is by getting a flu vaccine. Symptoms of the flu are much more serious than a cold or seasonal allergies, and could lead to severe health complications, especially for those who aren't healthy to begin with.

Q: When should I get a flu vaccine?

A: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that healthy adults get vaccinated before the end of October each year, but vaccinations in December or later may still be beneficial. If you're not sure when you should get the flu vaccine, or have questions about your health, call your doctor.

Q: How does the flu vaccine work?

A: The flu vaccine is updated every year to most closely match the current strain of the virus. The new vaccine each year helps you develop protective antibodies that can recognize and eliminate the flu virus in case you're exposed to it.

Q: Will the flu vaccine make me sick?

A: You won't catch the flu from a flu vaccine. Some people get a mild reaction if they receive the flu shot, such as redness or soreness in the area where you receive the flu shot.

Q: Which flu vaccine should I get?

A: According to the CDC, the flu shot is a safe vaccine for those ages six months and older. For the 2018-2019 flu season, the CDC also now recommends the nasal spray FluMist as a vaccine for those ages two to 49 years.

Flu Vaccine FAQ (continued)

Q: Who should get a flu vaccine?*

A: In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. Some people are considered to be high-risk for complications from the flu, and should be sure to get a flu vaccine each year, such as:

- Those 65 years and older (only recommended to get the flu shot)
- Those living in a nursing home or other long-term facility
- Adults and children six months and older who need regular medical care or were hospitalized within the previous year for a metabolic disease like diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or a weakened immune system, including immune system problems caused by medicines or by HIV/AIDS (only recommended to get the flu shot)
- Children six months to 18 years old who are on long-term aspirin therapy or taking aspirin- or salicylate-containing medications (only recommended to get the flu shot)
- Women who are or will become pregnant during flu season (only recommended to get the flu shot)
- Adults and children six months or older who have a condition that makes it hard to breathe or swallow, such as a brain injury or disease, spinal cord injury, seizure disorder, or other nerve or muscle disorder
- Adults and children six months or older who may spread the flu to others at high risk for complications, including health care workers, members of the same household, out-of-home caregivers of infants up to 23 months, and close contacts of people 65 years and older

*Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>

Q: Who shouldn't get a flu vaccine?*

A: Check with your doctor before getting a flu vaccine if any of the following health concerns apply to you:

- Known allergy to eggs or other ingredients in the flu vaccine
- A slight fever or illness when it's time to get your flu vaccine
- A severe or life-threatening reaction to the flu vaccine in the past
- Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralyzing illness, also called GBS)
- Currently wheezing or a history of wheezing for children aged five years and under (if receiving the FluMist vaccine)
- Currently taking Tamiflu®, Relenza®, amantadine, or rimantadine

If you need more information about the flu, call our **24/7 Nurse Care Line at 1-888-247-BLUE (2583)**, or call your doctor's office. You can also visit bluecrossma.com/flu for more flu facts.

Cold or Flu?

How can you tell the difference between a cold and the flu? You might have one or more of the symptoms below. If you have flu-related questions, or want more information about treating your symptoms, call our **24/7 Nurse Care Line at 1-888-247-BLUE (2583)**.

Flu symptoms may last three to four days:

- Fever of 102°–104°
- Muscle aches
- Chills
- Severe coughing
- Extreme fatigue
- General weakness

A cold's symptoms usually affect you above the neck:

- Fever of 101° or less
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Nasal or chest congestion

What to Do If You Get the Flu:

- Call our 24/7 Nurse Care Line at 1-888-247-BLUE (2583) to talk to a registered nurse about health-related questions, or call your doctor.
- Drink hot liquids to soothe your throat, help unplug your nose, and rehydrate your body.
- Keep throat lozenges or hard candies near you to avoid a dry throat.
- Avoid milk or dairy products for a few days, as these foods may make it hard to cough up mucus. If you have mucus in your throat, ask your doctor to suggest an over-the-counter expectorant.
- Check with your doctor to see if you should take any medication regularly, such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen sodium, to reduce the length of the flu.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing to prevent those around you from getting sick. If you can, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow to avoid spreading germs.
- If possible, stay home and get some rest.
- Before returning to work or other activities, make sure you're fever-free for at least 24 hours.

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ATTENTION: If you don't speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call Member Service at the number on your ID Card (TTY: 711).

ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia con el idioma. Llame al número de Servicio al Cliente que figura en su tarjeta de identificación (TTY: 711).

ATENÇÃO: Se fala português, são-lhe disponibilizados gratuitamente serviços de assistência de idiomas. Telefone para os Serviços aos Membros, através do número no seu cartão ID (TTY: 711).