



The Flu:

A Guide for Parents



Influenza (also known as flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. Flu is different from a cold, and usually comes on suddenly. Each year flu viruses cause millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospital stays and thousands or tens of thousands of deaths in the United States.

Flu can be very dangerous for children. CDC estimates that between 6,000 and 26,000 children younger than 5 years have been hospitalized each year in the United States because of influenza. The flu vaccine is safe and helps protect children from flu.

What parents should know

How serious is flu?

While flu illness can vary from mild to severe, children often need medical care because of flu. Children younger than 5 years and children of any age with certain long-term health problems are at high risk of flu complications like pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections. Some health problems that are known to make children more vulnerable to flu include asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system.

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly by droplets made when someone with flu coughs, sneezes or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. A person also can get flu by touching something that has flu virus on it and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose.

What are flu symptoms?

Flu symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, feeling tired and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults). Some people with the flu will not have a fever.



Protect your child

How can I protect my child from flu?

The first and best way to protect against flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine for yourself and your child.

- Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months and older every year. Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for vaccination.
- It's especially important that young children and children with certain long-term health problems get vaccinated.
- Caregivers of children at high risk of flu complications should get a flu vaccine. (Babies younger than 6 months are at high risk for serious flu complications, but too young to get a flu vaccine.)
- Pregnant women should get a flu vaccine to protect themselves and their baby from flu. Research shows that flu vaccination protects the baby from flu for several months after birth.
- Flu viruses are constantly changing and so flu vaccines are updated often to protect against the flu viruses that research indicates are most likely to cause illness during the upcoming flu season.

Is flu vaccine safe?

Flu vaccines are made using strict safety and production measures. Millions of people have safely received flu vaccines for decades. Flu shots and nasal spray flu vaccines are both options for vaccination. Different types of flu vaccines are licensed for different ages. Each person should get one that is appropriate for their age. CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend an annual flu vaccine for all children 6 months and older.

What are the benefits of getting a flu vaccine?

- A flu vaccine can keep you and your child from getting sick. When vaccine viruses and circulating viruses are matched, flu vaccination has been shown to reduce the risk of getting sick with flu by about half.
- Flu vaccines can keep your child from being hospitalized from flu. One recent study showed that flu vaccine reduced children's risk of flu-related pediatric intensive care unit admission by 74%.

- **Flu vaccine can prevent your child from dying from flu.**
A study using data from recent flu seasons found that flu vaccine reduced the risk of flu-associated death by half among children with high risk medical conditions and by nearly two-thirds among children without medical conditions.
- **Flu vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.**
- **Getting yourself and your child vaccinated also can protect others** who may be more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies and young children, older people, and people with certain long-term health problems.

What are some other ways I can protect my child against flu?

In addition to getting a flu vaccine, you and your child should take everyday actions to help prevent the spread of germs.

Stay away from people who are sick as much as possible to keep from getting sick yourself. If you or your child are sick, avoid others as much as possible to keep from infecting them. Also, remember to regularly cover your coughs and sneezes, wash your hands often, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and clean surfaces that may be contaminated with flu viruses. These everyday actions can help reduce your chances of getting sick and prevent the spread of germs to others if you are sick. However, a yearly flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu illness.

If your child is sick

What can I do if my child gets sick?

Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.

If your child is 5 years or older and does not have a long-term health problems and gets flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed.

Children younger than 5 years of age – especially those younger than 2 years – and children with certain long-term health problems (including asthma, diabetes and disorders of the brain or nervous system), are at high risk of serious flu complications. Call your doctor or take your child to the doctor right away if they develop flu symptoms.

What if my child seems very sick?

Even healthy children can get very sick from flu. If your child is experiencing the following emergency warning signs, you should go to the emergency room:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color

- Not drinking enough fluids (not going to the bathroom or not making as much urine as they normally do)
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with rash



Is there a medicine to treat flu?

Yes. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat flu illness. They can shorten your illness and make it milder, and they can prevent serious complications that could result in a hospital stay. Antivirals work best when started during the first 2 days of illness. Antiviral drugs are recommended to treat flu in people who are very sick (for example, people who are in the hospital) or people who are at high risk of serious flu complications who get flu symptoms. Antivirals can be given to children and pregnant women.

How long can a sick person spread flu to others?

People with flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to up to 5 to 7 days after. Severely ill people or young children may be able to spread the flu longer, especially if they still have symptoms.

Can my child go to school, day care, or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid spreading flu to other children or caregivers.

When can my child go back to school after having flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care, or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F (37.8°C) or higher.

For more information, visit

www.cdc.gov/flu

or call 800-CDC-INFO



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Influenza (Flu) Vaccine (Inactivated or Recombinant): *What you need to know*

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis

Hojas de información sobre vacunas están disponibles en español y en muchos otros idiomas. Visite www.immunize.org/vis

1 Why get vaccinated?

Influenza ("flu") is a contagious disease that spreads around the United States every year, usually between October and May.

Flu is caused by influenza viruses, and is spread mainly by coughing, sneezing, and close contact.

Anyone can get flu. Flu strikes suddenly and can last several days. Symptoms vary by age, but can include:

- fever/chills
- sore throat
- muscle aches
- fatigue
- cough
- headache
- runny or stuffy nose

Flu can also lead to pneumonia and blood infections, and cause diarrhea and seizures in children. If you have a medical condition, such as heart or lung disease, flu can make it worse.

Flu is more dangerous for some people. Infants and young children, people 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, and people with certain health conditions or a weakened immune system are at greatest risk.

Each year thousands of people in the United States die from flu, and many more are hospitalized.

Flu vaccine can:

- keep you from getting flu,
- make flu less severe if you do get it, and
- keep you from spreading flu to your family and other people.

2 Inactivated and recombinant flu vaccines

A dose of flu vaccine is recommended every flu season. Children 6 months through 8 years of age may need two doses during the same flu season. Everyone else needs only one dose each flu season.

Some inactivated flu vaccines contain a very small amount of a mercury-based preservative called thimerosal. Studies have not shown thimerosal in vaccines to be harmful, but flu vaccines that do not contain thimerosal are available.

There is no live flu virus in flu shots. **They cannot cause the flu.**

There are many flu viruses, and they are always changing. Each year a new flu vaccine is made to protect against three or four viruses that are likely to cause disease in the upcoming flu season. But even when the vaccine doesn't exactly match these viruses, it may still provide some protection.

Flu vaccine cannot prevent:

- flu that is caused by a virus not covered by the vaccine, or
- illnesses that look like flu but are not.

It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after vaccination, and protection lasts through the flu season.

3 Some people should not get this vaccine

Tell the person who is giving you the vaccine:

- **If you have any severe, life-threatening allergies.**

If you ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of flu vaccine, or have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, you may be advised not to get vaccinated. Most, but not all, types of flu vaccine contain a small amount of egg protein.

- **If you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (also called GBS).**

Some people with a history of GBS should not get this vaccine. This should be discussed with your doctor.

- **If you are not feeling well.**

It is usually okay to get flu vaccine when you have a mild illness, but you might be asked to come back when you feel better.



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4 Risks of a vaccine reaction

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of reactions. These are usually mild and go away on their own, but serious reactions are also possible.

Most people who get a flu shot do not have any problems with it.

Minor problems following a flu shot include:

- soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- hoarseness
- sore, red or itchy eyes
- cough
- fever
- aches
- headache
- itching
- fatigue

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

More serious problems following a flu shot can include the following:

- There may be a small increased risk of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) after inactivated flu vaccine. This risk has been estimated at 1 or 2 additional cases per million people vaccinated. This is much lower than the risk of severe complications from flu, which can be prevented by flu vaccine.
- Young children who get the flu shot along with pneumococcal vaccine (PCV13) and/or DTaP vaccine at the same time might be slightly more likely to have a seizure caused by fever. Ask your doctor for more information. Tell your doctor if a child who is getting flu vaccine has ever had a seizure.

Problems that could happen after any injected vaccine:

- People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting, and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, or have vision changes or ringing in the ears.
- Some people get severe pain in the shoulder and have difficulty moving the arm where a shot was given. This happens very rarely.
- Any medication can cause a severe allergic reaction. Such reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at about 1 in a million doses, and would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored. For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/

5 What if there is a serious reaction?

What should I look for?

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or unusual behavior.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

What should I do?

- If you think it is a severe allergic reaction or other emergency that can't wait, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, call your doctor.
- Reactions should be reported to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Your doctor should file this report, or you can do it yourself through the VAERS web site at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

VAERS does not give medical advice.

6 The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program

The National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP) is a federal program that was created to compensate people who may have been injured by certain vaccines.

Persons who believe they may have been injured by a vaccine can learn about the program and about filing a claim by calling 1-800-338-2382 or visiting the VICP website at www.hrsa.gov/vaccinecompensation. There is a time limit to file a claim for compensation.

7 How can I learn more?

- Ask your healthcare provider. He or she 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) or
 - Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/flu

Vaccine Information Statement
Inactivated Influenza Vaccine

08/07/2015

42 U.S.C. § 300aa-26

Office Use Only



Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is a rare, but very serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Even if treated quickly, meningococcal disease can cause long-term problems or be deadly. Getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent meningococcal disease.



Meningococcal Disease Can Lead to Meningitis or Bloodstream Infection

Meningococcal disease has two common outcomes – meningitis and bloodstream infection. These infections typically appear within 3 to 7 days after being exposed to the bacteria. Both of these conditions are very serious and can be deadly. In fatal cases, deaths can occur in as little as a few hours. People who recover from meningococcal disease can have lifelong complications, such as loss of limb(s), deafness, nervous system problems, or brain damage.

Meningitis

When someone has meningococcal meningitis, the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord becomes infected and swells. Symptoms of meningococcal meningitis include sudden onset of **fever, headache, and stiff neck**. There can be additional symptoms, such as:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Confusion

In babies, these symptoms can be difficult to notice or may not be there at all. Instead, a baby may appear slow or inactive, be irritable, vomit, or feed poorly.

Bloodstream Infection

When someone has a meningococcal bloodstream infection, the bacteria can enter the bloodstream and multiply, damaging the walls of the blood vessels and causing bleeding into the skin and organs. Symptoms may include:

- Fever or cold chills
- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Cold hands and feet
- Severe aches or pain in the muscles, joints, chest, or belly (abdomen)
- Rapid breathing
- A dark purple rash

Meningococcal disease is a very serious illness that requires immediate medical care.



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National Center for Immunization
and Respiratory Diseases

Certain People are at Increased Risk for Meningococcal Disease

Babies, teens, and young adults have higher rates of meningococcal disease than people of other ages do. Other factors, such as having certain medical conditions or traveling to certain countries, can increase your risk for getting this disease, no matter how old you are. **Talk to your healthcare professional to see if you or your child is at increased risk for meningococcal disease.**

Meningococcal Disease is Spread from Person to Person

The bacteria that cause meningococcal disease are spread by exchanging respiratory and throat secretions (saliva or spit) during close (for example, coughing or kissing) or lengthy contact, especially if living in the same household. Fortunately, these bacteria are much harder to spread than viruses that cause the common cold or the flu.

Meningococcal Disease is Very Serious but Treatable

Meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics (medicine that kills bacteria in the body). It is important that treatment be started as soon as possible. However, about 1 to 2 out of every 10 people who get meningococcal disease will die from the infection, even with quick and appropriate treatment. **If you think you or your child has meningococcal disease, seek medical care right away.**

Who Should Get Vaccinated Against Meningococcal Disease?

- All preteens and teens
- People 2 months old or older with certain medical conditions that affect the immune system
- Microbiologists who routinely work with *N. meningitidis*
- People 2 months old or older who are traveling to certain countries
- People 2 months old or older at risk because of an outbreak in their community

There are two types of vaccines that help protect against meningococcal disease. Most people who get a meningococcal vaccine do not have any serious problems with it. Side effects are usually mild and go away on their own within a few days, but serious reactions are also possible. **Talk to your healthcare professional about which vaccines you or your child may need.**

When Do Teenagers Need to be Vaccinated?

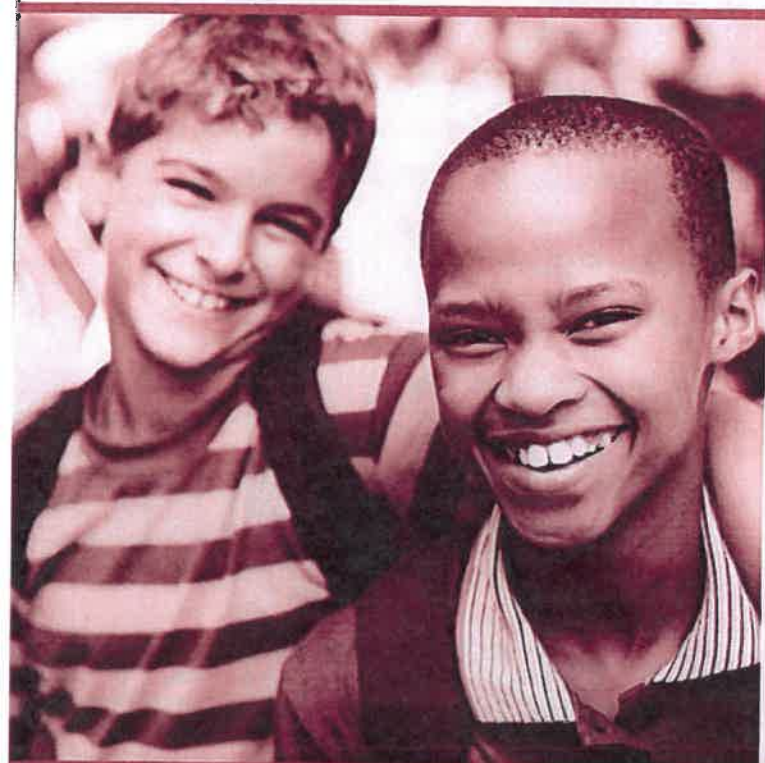
All preteens and teens should get vaccinated against meningococcal disease.

Preteens

All 11 to 12 year olds should receive one dose of a meningococcal conjugate vaccine that helps protect against four types (serogroups) of the bacteria: A, C, W, and Y.

Teens and Young Adults

Teens should receive a booster dose of a meningococcal conjugate vaccine when they are 16 years old to continue having protection during the years (16 through 23 years) when they are most at risk for getting meningococcal disease. Teens and young adults (16 through 23 year olds) may also be vaccinated with a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine, preferably when they are between 16 and 18 years old.



Meningococcal ACWY Vaccine:

What You Need to Know

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1 Why get vaccinated?

Meningococcal disease is a serious illness caused by a type of bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can lead to meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and infections of the blood. Meningococcal disease often occurs without warning—even among people who are otherwise healthy.

Meningococcal disease can spread from person to person through close contact (coughing or kissing) or lengthy contact, especially among people living in the same household.

There are at least 12 types of *N. meningitidis*, called “serogroups.” Serogroups A, B, C, W, and Y cause most meningococcal disease.

Anyone can get meningococcal disease but certain people are at increased risk, including:

- Infants younger than one year old
- Adolescents and young adults 16 through 23 years old
- People with certain medical conditions that affect the immune system
- Microbiologists who routinely work with isolates of *N. meningitidis*
- People at risk because of an outbreak in their community

Even when it is treated, meningococcal disease kills 10 to 15 infected people out of 100. And of those who survive, about 10 to 20 out of every 100 will suffer disabilities such as hearing loss, brain damage, kidney damage, amputations, nervous system problems, or severe scars from skin grafts.

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine can help prevent meningococcal disease caused by serogroups A, C, W, and Y. A different meningococcal vaccine is available to help protect against serogroup B.

2 Meningococcal ACWY Vaccine

Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MenACWY) is licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for protection against serogroups A, C, W, and Y.

Two doses of MenACWY are routinely recommended for adolescents 11 through 18 years old: the first dose at 11 or 12 years old, with a booster dose at age 16. Some adolescents, including those with HIV, should get additional doses. Ask your health care provider for more information.

In addition to routine vaccination for adolescents, MenACWY vaccine is also recommended for certain groups of people:

- People at risk because of a serogroup A, C, W, or Y meningococcal disease outbreak
- People with HIV
- Anyone whose spleen is damaged or has been removed, including people with sickle cell disease
- Anyone with a rare immune system condition called “persistent complement component deficiency”
- Anyone taking a drug called eculizumab (also called Soliris®)
- Microbiologists who routinely work with isolates of *N. meningitidis*
- Anyone traveling to, or living in, a part of the world where meningococcal disease is common, such as parts of Africa
- College freshmen living in dormitories
- U.S. military recruits

Some people need multiple doses for adequate protection. Ask your health care provider about the number and timing of doses, and the need for booster doses.



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3

Some people should not get this vaccine

Tell the person who is giving you the vaccine **if you have any severe, life-threatening allergies**. If you have ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a previous dose of meningococcal ACWY vaccine, or if you have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, you should not get this vaccine. Your provider can tell you about the vaccine's ingredients.

Not much is known about the risks of this vaccine for a pregnant woman or breastfeeding mother. However, pregnancy or breastfeeding are not reasons to avoid MenACWY vaccination. A pregnant or breastfeeding woman should be vaccinated if she is at increased risk of meningococcal disease.

If you have a mild illness, such as a cold, you can probably get the vaccine today. If you are moderately or severely ill, you should probably wait until you recover. Your doctor can advise you.

4

Risks of a vaccine reaction

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of side effects. These are usually mild and go away on their own within a few days, but serious reactions are also possible.

As many as half of the people who get meningococcal ACWY vaccine have **mild problems** following vaccination, such as redness or soreness where the shot was given. If these problems occur, they usually last for 1 or 2 days.

A small percentage of people who receive the vaccine experience muscle or joint pains.

Problems that could happen after any injected vaccine:

- People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent fainting, and injuries caused by a fall. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy or lightheaded, or have vision changes.
- Some people get severe pain in the shoulder and have difficulty moving the arm where a shot was given. This happens very rarely.
- Any medication can cause a severe allergic reaction. Such reactions from a vaccine are very rare, estimated at about 1 in a million doses, and would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

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- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or unusual behavior.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness—usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

What should I do?

- If you think it is a severe allergic reaction or other emergency that can't wait, call 9-1-1 and get to the nearest hospital. Otherwise, call your doctor.

Afterward, the reaction should be reported to the "Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System" (VAERS). Your doctor should file this report, or you can do it yourself through the VAERS web site at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

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How can I learn more?

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- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO) or
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Vaccine Information Statement (Interim)
**Meningococcal ACWY
Vaccines**



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